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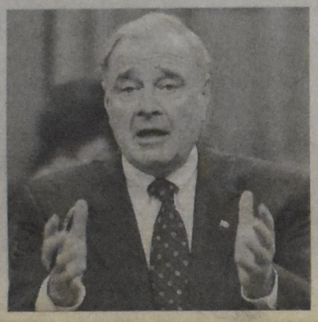
59th year of publication

Where are we headed? Who will lead us?

Harry der Nederlanden

At the time of this writing, Stephen Harper has expressed his determination to bring down the Liberal government at the earliest opportunity and to force a new election. An attempt on May 2, however, to bring a non-confidence motion to the floor of the Commons was defeated with the help of the NDP. The government had also taken steps to keep non-confidence motions from reaching the floor of the Commons until the end of May. Whether this stratagem stands up, I'm told, depends on the Speaker.



While touting the virtues of democracy and elections abroad, we Canadians are groaning at the prospect of another election here at home. The only people energized at the prospect seem to be politicians – and perhaps not a great many of them are happy with the idea either. But a campaign is exciting, for it is much easier to campaign against the stupidity, incompetence and corruption of your opponent than to govern well yourself.

The Gomery Inquiry, which has sparked the election talk, is far from over. So far it has uncovered allegations that those getting contracts from the government to promote Canada primarily in Quebec by sponsoring a variety of events were pressured to pass on some of the inordinate profits to the Liberal Party in Quebec. Although it appears likely that some Liberal Party members were guilty of various degrees of wrongdoing, none of the allegations have yet been proven.

In fact, some of the most publicized moments in the Gomery hearings focused on disproportionate pay for little or no work done. That may, and should, outrage taxpayers, but it is not necessarily a crime. If it were, every government would be guilty of criminal behavior. Given the size and scope of government programs, there are bound to be some badly managed or monitored programs here and there.

Some of the men who garnered big profits from government contracts were guilty of little more than refusing to disturb the goose that was laying the golden eggs. If the government is willing to pay $100,000 for a job you'd gladly do for $10,000 is it your duty to object and insist you be paid less?

What proportion of adscam waste is attributable to sloppiness with public monies rather than to out-and-out chicanery?

Writing in the *National Post* (April 19), David Frum argues that adscam was not "a noble plan gone wrong, an attempt to beat back separatism that was unfortunately corrupted by a few bad apples." He charges that Chrétien deliberately set in motion a kickback scheme: "As Liberal strength in Quebec has decayed, the Liberals have found it more and more difficult to hold together an effective political organization in the province. How do you sustain a political party without principles or vision? Sometimes you do it with graft."

That, however, remains to be proven – and won't be until the Gomery Inquiry is finished.

Is it responsible to bring down a government over the sponsorship scandal before the inquiry is over?

The opposition has claimed that the Liberal Party has lost the "moral authority" to govern. However, that is true only if the corruption is shown to be endemic rather than an isolated instance. After all, it is under the authority of the present government that the corruption is being exposed and the perpetrators being brought to account. In doing so, it has distanced itself from the politics of adscam.

I'm assuming that the corruption exposed by the Gomery Inquiry is not endemic but limited to that program. That may be wrong. According to Diane Francis (*National Post*, April 26), the Liberals also perpetrated a scam with about $1 billion in Human Resources Development Corporation grants. Almost 9 out of 10 grants issued under that program were completely unmonitored. Liberals refused to investigate. But perhaps it's just Liberal policy to give away money with no strings attached.

It may also be argued that with the constant trickle of revelations

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A springtime for democracy?

Harry der Nederlanden

How is democracy doing in the different countries that have reached out for democratic self-rule? Is this a springtime for democracy in those parts of the world that have been pining for it?

Is democracy possible at the end of a gun

The Ukraine's so-called "orange revolution" has faded entirely from newspapers along with the Romanian revolution of several years ago. The ouster of the government in Kyrgyzstan may never have had much to do with democracy nor may the ignominious flight of Ecuador's president (the third in eight years), but no doubt the democratic cause was invoked anyway.

Academics, commentators and journalists have, however, been very much preoccupied with the question as to whether Islam can or will open itself to democratic reform.

For a while, as Syria was withdrawing from Lebanon, many wondered whether the country would slip back into the state of perpetual civil war that gripped it before Syria intervened. Although Beirut saw several explosions, which targeted predominantly Christian neighborhoods, the aftermath of the Syrian withdrawal, completed at the end of April, has been peaceful. So there are still high hopes for the "cedar revolution." Lebanon's interim prime minister has scheduled national elections for May 29.

One of the by-products of the Lebanese uprising has been an increased openness in Syria itself. Syrian dictator Bashar Assad has promised political reforms many times but has not acted on his promises. A small number of brave pro-democracy activists in Syria are daring to speak out, reported Paul Koring (*Globe and Mail*, May 4). Some of them have already spent time in jail.

Kurdish cleric Machouk Alkhaznawi told Koring, "Either the regime will change, or the regime must go." He added, "I couldn't have said this five years ago because the Americans weren't in Iraq five years ago. The reason I and others can speak out is because the Americans are trying to get rid of dictators and help the oppressed."

The intellectuals Koring talked to were careful to distance themselves from Bush's program, but most agreed that outside pressure is crucial to any hopes of internal political change in Syria, observed Koring. But one Syrian dissident suggested that the people of Syria are almost as afraid of the collapse of the regime as they are

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from the Gomery Inquiry, it is becoming impossible for the government to focus on getting the bills passed that are needed to run this country. Most of the action in the House of Commons keeps being diverted to questions dealing with the scandal. That, however, is as much the fault of the opposition as of the Liberal Party. According to polls, most Canadians would like to see their representatives spend more time pursuing the best interests of the country rather than casting stones at one another.

After the most damning cluster of allegations, P.M. Martin went on television to make a pitch to Canadians that he still possessed the moral authority to lead the country and set the budget. Most media chose to represent it as groveling or pleading for another chance. He was faulted for inflating a party crisis into a national crisis. On the one hand he was mocked for being pathetic and on the other for not begging for forgiveness. Harper chose not to be magnanimous, obviously gloating at the Prime Minister's discomfort.

Getting no compassion there, Martin turned to the NDP, celebrated for its compassion. In Jack Layton he found a sympathetic ear. Of course, if the Liberal-NDP deal stands it will cost the Canadian taxpayer another $4.6 billion.

Harper was outraged by the deal – as well he should be. It almost amounted to passing the power to make the budget to a party that drew but a small fraction of voter support. Harper called it the most disgraceful thing he'd seen in all his years on the hill. (We may take that with a grain of salt.)

Other Conservatives charged that the Liberals were once again doing what they did so well in adscam – using public funds to buy the public's votes.

Martin assured the electorate that, although he'd firmly rejected the NDP proposal only a couple of weeks earlier, the new spending initiatives meshed perfectly with what he'd been planning all along. I don't believe we should interpret this to mean that Martin had been planning to cross the floor to join the NDP.

At the present moment, all this leaves us anticipating another election in the near future. Earlier polls showed the Tories pulling neck to neck with the Liberals, but several polls taken later show that the anger generated by adscam revelations does not last long. A week or so later the levels of support for the parties were back to what they had been at the beginning of the inquiry.

What will happen come a spring election? We can be pretty sure that it will be at least as scurrilous as the last one, with each side focusing on vilifying the other rather than on the issues. The Conservatives know that to win more seats they have to keep on hammering on the themes of corruption, blackmail, kickbacks, extortion, bribery – in short, portraying the Liberals as political mobsters. The Liberals will, no doubt, blame the Conservatives for causing a costly election and for playing into the hands of the separatists. And they will play the fear card, painting the Conservatives as anti-immigration, homophobic, un-Canadian, uncompassionate, Bush-loving right-wingers controlled by the "secret agenda" of religious fundamentalists. Yes, it's a depressing prospect.

If voters swing to the Conservatives in sufficiently large numbers to make a difference, it will not be because of Conservative policies but because they want to punish the Liberals. That's not a very strong mandate by which to govern. At best, the Tories will achieve a minority government, with the Liberals teaming up with the NDP to make life miserable, if not impossible, for the minority government. The NDP will probably gain seats as will the Bloc in Quebec. The Bloc hardly sees eye to eye with the Conservatives on any issue.

How long would a minority Conservative government last? Its nearest ally will be the Liberals, whom they will just have demonized in every way possible.

The big question in my mind is how long till the next election after this next one? And in that one the voters will be disgruntled not with the Liberals but with the Conservatives. You hardly need a crystal ball to predict what happens next.

Citizens for Public Justice commented recently: "We need a political culture that breeds trust. And we need good women and men who engender trust in their actions, their organizations, and the policies that they put forward."

That's why it is important that corruption be exposed and proper controls be put in place. But it's also important not to exaggerate the scope of the corruption, for that breeds cynicism. And it is also important that those representing us in the House of Commons not be seen to be acting merely out of partisan political motives but for the good of the country.

Democracy ... *cont. from p.1*

of the regime's power.

Along with Lebanon, many have pointed to Saudi Arabia as another Arab country feeling the "Arab spring." Saudis were able to vote for the first time in four decades this month, but the elections were only for town councils. Women were not permitted to vote, and the turnout was poor.

Although those pressuring for change in countries like Saudi Arabia are Islamists and not secularists, the *Economist* pointed out, they are more moderate than the Wahhabi fundamentalists and favor democracy and constitutional limits to executive power. Small steps.

Kuwait recently considered allowing women to vote, but lawmakers backed off. Nevertheless, the issue is on the table and has some impassioned supporters in the country. Bahrain, Qatar and Oman have all allowed women to vote.

The Palestinian election brought into power the moderating leadership of Mahmoud Abbas. The peace he brokered has held longer than many had dared to hope. He has made attempts to eliminate armed factions in his country, but he has little choice but to rely on persuasion, and that has by no means yet succeeded in uniting the various factions. Much depends on Abbas' ability to wring concessions from Israel and to bring some signs of life into a terribly crippled economy. Israel has not been very helpful, having its hands full with its own increasingly strident political factions.

In Afghanistan, democracy has brought increased crime and opium poppy production. But recently some Taliban have been coming in from the cold in response to President Hamid Karzai's amnesty offer.

In Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak, who has ruled Egypt for 24 years, recently went on television three nights running to put his case before the people. In the next election, he will have to run against someone else for the first time. Egypt's previous elections were all referendums in which voters could only vote yes or no on Mubarak. Under pressure from the U.S., this year Mubarak has promised to allow a competitor.

Although it took nearly three months and some prodding from the U.S., Iraq finally managed to overcome its sectarian divisions enough to form a government. It now has eight months in which to write a constitution, when it will be submitted to the people for a vote.

Because Sunnis largely refrained from voting, the new Iraqi government is dominated by Shiites and Kurds. However, they did make room for six Sunni ministers, one of whom has even been given the defence portfolio.

Many experts have expressed fears that a government divided along sectarian lines portends a future fraught with conflict, instability and perhaps civil war. But many experts are deeply biased against religion, believing it to be the root of hostility rather than peace, not recognizing their own religious commitment to secularism.

Hopes had been high that as the legitimacy of the Iraq government grew, acts of terror might decrease. That has not happened. In fact, the formation of a government seemed to trigger a renewed surge of attacks and suicide bombings, killing large numbers of Iraqis. No matter what governing mechanisms are put in place, as long as there is this level of violence the chances of creating a genuinely democratic civil society are poor. Democracy depends upon a commitment to the peaceful negotiation of differences.

Nathan C. Funk, assistant professor of peace and conflict studies at the University of Waterloo, wrote recently: "Democracy is much more than elections, and its practices must have deep roots in the soil of local cultures if they are to become perennial, not ephemeral, realities. An outbreak of elections, though positive in and of itself, is not the same thing as a groundswell of democracy. Policies that stir up rather than resolve cultural and religious antagonisms are sewing seeds of future conflict, not democracy."

Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawar, Iraq's interim president

Thomas Friedman, a well-known analyst of Middle East culture, wrote in the New York Times that there is a "war within Islam between Traditionalists and Rationalists, which dates back to Baghdad in the ninth century; the struggle between ardent Sunnis and Shiites, which dates back to succession battles in early Islam; and the confrontation between Islam and the West, which dates back to the Arab conquests of the seventh century and the Crusades.

"In the modern incarnation of each of these struggles, members of the Sunni- Traditionalist- jihadist minority are losing. And the more that becomes evident, the more violent they will become – because their whole vision is in danger of being repudiated by fellow Arabs and Muslims."

To the radical insurgents the struggle for democracy in Iraq is contrary to everything they stand for, says Friedman – "a literalist interpretation of Islam, unsullied by modernity, adaptation, women's rights or political and religious pluralism."

In an earlier article, he observed: "There is still, throughout the Arab world, a very weak notion of statehood and citizenship. And there are still very few civil society institutions outside the mosque, and little historical experience with a free press, free markets or real parliamentary democracy to build upon when the walls fall."

Daniel Serwer, a postconflict expert at the US Institute of Peace concedes that there is more intense identification with sectarian groups in Iraq. But he argues that this does not necessarily signal a slide to greater inter-ethnic conflict and instability.

"There's no question but that there's been a polarization of ethnic groups in Iraq, but that's quite common in postconflict situations," he says. "The question is if it can be bridged now, and that's a tough one. But I don't think anything irreversible has happened that would lead to a breakup."

One sign of hope is that Iraq's top Shia cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, preaches against both sectarianism and the Iranian model of clerical rule.

Politics

Situation in Sudan shows few signs of improvement

Reports from aid and human rights agencies indicate that the "slow genocide" in Sudan's western province of Darfur may have slowed but it has not been stopped. The crisis, begun when the government in Khartoum exacerbated tensions between black farmers and Arab herdsmen, has been claiming human lives and devastating the area for two years.

Over 1.5 million people have now fled to refugee camps and are dependent on daily aid. Not enough of it is getting through, so besides being subjected to raids, rape and murder, the people are dying of famine and diseases that attend malnutrition.

According to Human Rights Watch, aid workers in Sudan report being shot at, arrested and repeatedly robbed by rebels as well as the government supported Janjaweed. Some roads have been declared unsafe and some agencies have withdrawn staff from dangerous areas. Drivers for food aid agencies are refusing to go into some areas for fear of being mugged and robbed.

A number of different countries, including Europe and the U.S. have pledged several billion in aid to help in the resettlement of people in southern Sudan, where a peace deal has been arranged after 20 years of civil war. But it is conditional on the government stopping the atrocities that continue in Darfur.

On April 20, the UN passed a resolution condemning "the continued, widespread and systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law" in the region. Critics said it let the Sudan government off easy, for it did not name the government as responsible for much of what is happening.

Roving Arab militias (Janjaweed) still attack and still appear to be receiving help from Sudan's government, although not direct Army support, notes the Christian Science Monitor.

An editorial called for greater involvement by NATO to support the efforts by African Union troops to bring peace to the region.

"The latest piece of a solution," says the editorial, "is a decision by the African Union (AU) to triple its troops in Darfur to 7,700 and ask NATO for logistical support. Even that additional foreign presence in a region the size of France wouldn't be enough, but it shows confidence is growing that outside intervention can be effective.

"Sudan's government tacitly approves NATO's potential role in Darfur, but France, which has preferred a strictly European role in Africa's crises, may be ready to shoot down this request of NATO by African nations."

Weaker measures have failed, argues the *Monitor*: "Only by backing AU troops with essential NATO planes and other equipment can the Arab militia, known as Janjaweed, be intimidated to give up for good. Darfur can't be made whole without more money, troops, and a more united, international effort."

Jan Egeland, the United Nations emergency relief co-ordinator, warned that up to four million people are at risk if the security situation does not improve.

"We did prevent the massive famine that many predicted, but I think now it's time to say we may perhaps not be able to do so in the coming months if the situation keeps on deteriorating," he said. He warned that the death toll could surpass that of the Indian Ocean tsunamis, which killed 170,000 people at the end of December.

ZIMBABWE: Re-election to UN Human Rights Commission uproar

JOHANNESBURG (IRIN) – Human rights groups have called for the "immediate reform" of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) after Zimbabwe's re-election to the 53-member commission on Wednesday.

Zimbabwe was among 15 countries chosen to sit on the commission for the next three years, prompting immediate protests from the United States and other developed nations.

Western governments and rights groups have branded the move as "inappropriate," pointing to legislation that severely curtails civil liberties in the southern African country.

"We remain deeply concerned that the government of Zimbabwe maintains repressive controls on political assembly and the media, harasses civil society groups, and continues to encourage a climate where the opposition fears for its safety," William Brencick, deputy US representative to the Economic and Social Council, said in statement.

Although members of the Human Rights Commission are elected by the UN Economic and Social Council, seats are allotted to regional groupings, which put forward most of the candidates without opposition.

Human rights campaigners in Zimbabwe said the decision was a serious blow to efforts aimed at getting President Robert Mugabe's government to own up to rights abuses.

"We are disappointed that this august body has allowed Zimbabwe to rejoin its ranks. This is definitely a slap in the face for human rights groups, who have been monitoring and documenting serious rights abuses perpetrated by the Zimbabwean government. We will, however, continue our work in the face of this adversity," chairman of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Albert Musarurwa, told IRIN.

He criticised the human rights commission for allowing countries with poor human rights records to use their membership to protect one another from condemnation.

"The commission must be immediately reformed if it is going to hold onto the little credibility it has. It is quite obvious that Zimbabwe's re-election to the body is a direct result of bloc voting by African governments," Musarurwa commented.

South African-based political analyst Chris Maroleng noted: "The fact that Zimbabwe was re-elected is hardly surprising, especially since the African regional grouping on the commission is the largest. There still is a rift between what the West expects of Zimbabwe and how African governments view the current situation in the country."

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has proposed disbanding the Geneva-based commission and replacing it with a smaller Human Rights Council, and that members of the council be elected directly by a two-thirds vote in the 191-member General Assembly.

The fate of the commission will be decided when the General Assembly meets in New York in September to discuss reform of the organisation.

Musarurwa said: "As its stands the commission cannot function when countries which are well-known for rights abuses such as China, Sudan and Zimbabwe, are in charge of judging themselves."

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Editorial

Why you remind me of the pope

Harry der Nederlanden

Many of us joined in celebrating the life of one pope recently and also took a peek into the life of the one who took his place. We were reminded of where the admirable strength of Pope John Paul II or Karl Wojtyla came from. I read part of a biography and watched a couple of 2-hour TV specials. I could not help but be moved by the story of his youth and the development of his faith, first under Nazi totalitarianism and then under Communist totalitarianism. Both sought to dissolve the true faith and replace it with a surrogate faith, but the suppression, while harming and even killing some, only made Wojtyla stronger.

The way he stood up to the Communist authorities when he was a priest and bishop in his native Poland and the way he inspired an entire nation with hope was and still is an inspiration to each and every Christian in the world, and even to non-Christians who value freedom and non-violence. Through the media, we were all able to experience something of the faith and the strength of character of that one man. But anyone with an open mind and heart had already been able to do so well before the media frenzy at his death.

Here was a man, once a young man who loved drama, poetry, hiking and skiing, whose life touched ours and whose virtues infused and strengthened ours. No matter how good his character, that would probably not have happened had he remained a simple teacher in an obscure seminary in Poland writing difficult treatises in Polish.

We derived inspiration and strength from his life because of the office he held in the Catholic Church. In fact, much of the drama that unfolded in his resistance to totalitarianism would not have happened had he not been first a priest and then a bishop and so on. No doubt there was something in Karl Wojtyla's character that prompted him to become a priest, but there was also something in that office that enabled those character traits to develop.

I'm not just thinking about such ordinary things as his priestly training and his education in theology, but also and primarily about that personal interaction between him and the people – and the young people – to whom he was called to provide leadership. Some people are ground down and stressed out by those responsibilities. And no doubt Wojtyla, a man who loved books and solitude, had his bad moments as well.

But he grew in strength and in stature, becoming one of those figures that Emerson called "representative men." He was an exemplary figure, a living book, representing to us something of what we can be, are meant to be. We often refer to someone like him as "larger than life," but that enlargement is something God built into the very structure of human life.

Office, and those who become closely identified with their office, are more often held up to criticism and ridicule nowadays than celebrated. We tend to associate office with impersonal institutions and bureaucracy – forces that inhibit the personal. Robes of office are seen more as straitjackets than as an enhancement of authentic personhood. That's too bad. Understandable, in light of what we often do with office, but an error nevertheless.

This was driven home to me in my own congregation recently. Within a short time, we at Jubilee CRC had to say goodbye to two very good leaders, first our pastor Peter Slofstra and then our assistant pastor Jamie Vandenberg. Both of them were good leaders and contributed greatly to the vitality of that (ever-changing) group of people who call themselves Jubilee CRC. Each had unique gifts and strengths that they shared with the rest of us and that made us better people. Their leaving was an emotional time for many because they were part of the "soul" of our community, if I may use that word.

In his farewell sermon, Jamie Vanderberg shared with us something of his very personal struggle with a shyness aggravated by acne. We shared something of his wonder at the fact that he was standing in front of us as someone who had grown into a leader, the object of our communal affection and respect. His story reminded me of the story of John Paul II, on a smaller scale, of course. It was a story of weakness and struggle turned into strength – a strength that passed itself to us, that reinforced us as a body.

Were they exceptional individuals to begin with? I asked myself, as I listened to the accolades for Jamie at the farewell following the service. Yes, of course, in the sense that we all are to some extent. But their strengths, derived from a personal journey, were made public property, as it were, because they assumed an office.

In our day and age, when behaviorists and sociologists presume to be able to explain everything, I want to recover something of the mystery of that interweaving of lives, that symbiosis of character. It's a precious and miraculous thing, and at the same time it's something that, I believe, God implanted in us from the beginning.

As I listened to various members of the congregation describe what Jamie's person and work meant to them, it dawned on me that I'd been thinking of it as a one-way transfusion – Jamie's strengths and gifts to us. But the wonder of office is that there is no less an infusion of ourselves into the person who plays that role. He (she) is carried and enlarged by the rest of us. If things go as they should (always a big "if"), the result is not the inflation of a single individual but the stimulation and integration of the gifts of many diverse people. All of us are enlarged, our different histories and gifts enlisted, when person and office come together felicitously.

We are together mobilized into the mission of the church. Together, as office-bearers and as people who participate in the office of all believers, we wonderfully, mystically, charismatically become part of the post-resurrection body of Christ animated by his Holy Spirit and imbued with those traits of God's image given to us at creation.

We've gotten into the bad habit of sundering and contrasting charisma and office, personal gifts and official duties. Ideally, they go together like a horse and carriage. And that mystical interweaving and exchange of very personal stories and charismata is not confined to the body of Christ as it comes to expression in church.

In our society, actors and sports figures are much more likely to play such a representative role. In most cases, however, the stories and character traits that come into play are largely fictional or illusory. An actor like John Wayne becomes associated with fictional roles he has dramatized in movies. A quarterback like Brett Favre exemplifies a rather narrow set of traits that may or may not accord with his character off the field.

But, although they resemble each other, the representative role of the star is different from that of office. The magic of office, however, extends far beyond the church. The on-going exposure of the adscam scandal is about office. In the political arena, too, we need to cultivate a much greater appreciation of the divine gift of office: it enables us to govern and discipline ourselves to live peaceably together, to harness the diverse gifts of different communities to work together for shared goals that enlarge rather than diminish each and everyone of us.

Unfortunately, the Gomery Inquiry tells us more about what happens when those in office lose sight of their calling. Office is a gift from God enabling us to enlarge our individual selves by sharing and participating in the gifts of others – to a common calling. Often office is exploited simply to enlarge the person who holds that office.

But it's sometimes a narrow way, a tightrope on which it is hard to keep your balance. We may be tempted to paint those men appearing before the Gomery Inquiry as scoundrels without a conscience. Most of them, howevere, were probably pretty good men who became involved in the struggle for Canadian unity, to keep Quebec within Canada. And they saw the Liberal Party as the indispensable agent to preserve that unity. What was good for the Liberal Party was good for Canada and vice versa. Some undoubtedly lost all sense of distinction between their own ambitions, those of the party and those of the nation. The various stories meshed – but in a self-aggrandizing way.

Holding and discharging an office is a noble and wonderful privilege. It is also an exacting and demanding discipline. Whether one holds an office in the realm of church, school, home, politics, business or elsewhere, it is a spiritual discipline. And it is a mutual discipline. We need office bearers who make us bigger than we are, who spur us on and lead us to take on greater challenges, but they need us too, not just as followers but as a disciplined people who in turn challenge them to greater things.

The model for such discipline, and the one who enables us to make mutual sacrifices, is, of course, the Man who represents us before God and who represents God to us – Jesus Christ.

Pope John Paul II served as a vivid mirror of that kind of faithful discharge of office. But so did Peter and Jamie for us at Jubilee. And so did the late Marinus Koole, a member of our congregation who built up a thriving greenhouse business. And so do the teachers in our congregation. And so do many of the people you go to church with and do business with every day of the week....

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Letters

Formulating the question

In the April 18 *Christian Courier*, John Bolt argues that the question "What did Terri want?" is the wrong one to ask. Instead, he suggests a series of leading queries, some phrased with such heavily value-laden suggestions that the answer allows only one outcome – removing Schiavo's feeding tube was wrong.

As an academic and teacher, Bolt likely knows that formulating the question goes a long way to getting the desired answer.

If one asked, "For how long should a medical team employ invasive, unnatural technology to keep bodily organs functioning long after the 'person' has died?" would one get another result?

Andy den Otter
Memorial University

Desensitized to brutality

I also did not appreciate the cover of the Easter issue of the *Christian Courier* of March 21, 2005, depicting Jesus hanging on the cross. A contemporary portrayal of the crucifixion would be a dead Jesus slouched in an electric chair. A rather morbid picture don't you think? Unfortunately, we are so used to seeing Jesus hanging on the cross, we are desensitized to it's brutality.

We are a society that is addicted to violence and I believe it is high time we stopped worshiping a human form hanging on the cross by large spikes! Christians need to begin to think about how they are perpetuating the violence that is so prevalent in our society and come up with alternative ways of remembering the Easter story. An artistic "in memory of" white cross could be more fitting I would think.

Arlene Van Hove

Amazed, amused and sad

After reading your beautiful magazine from May 2, I was amazed, amused and sad all at the same time. It was the column of Building Trust that caused this. Vicky Van Andel already wrote about Women in office in the same column (April 4) under the title "More progress needed on the role of women in the CRC." That article was signed by Henk and Vicky. This time the title is "Synod 2005: It's now, or another long wait for women." Both articles stress how important it is that women get equal rights as man in the church.

Although I am deeply convinced that women have great gifts for all the offices, what is the problem? The only thing that they are not able to do is to become delegates to Synod. She encourages people to contact their delegates and gives a website to contact them. Does this not smell like lobbying? Why does she not use the Banner for this? How many people read *CC* south of the border?

In her last article she writes about a friend who told her that she is more concerned about her children and grandchildren whose relationships are adapting to their changing roles in life. The same person says that the church is not keeping pace with the changing times. We need church life to fit with reality of our daily life. If the church can't do that it isn't relevant. She comes to the conclusion that if our church leaders are not able to make the change, the next generation will do it for sure. So, why not do it now and start reaping the benefits?

The only reason I can think of is that the time is not here. Nobody knows better than women that something born premature has a poor change to survive. It would be nice if those who bring this up again and again could see the damage it has done so far in the CRC. We have lost thousands of our most faithful families, and they took with them many others who did not like our worship style or had other issues.

It is hard for me to see this as a benefit, and the end is not in sight. Vicky also writes about a sermon she heard and how Christ does not just teach us the way but is the way. That is indeed our great example and he is the ruler of the universe, and that is because he was willing to become the lowest servant. How then can we as his followers fight for our rights at all costs?

Hans Katerberg
Gowanstown

OttawaCitizen
Caglecartoons.com
LOOK, LADY, I'M NOT PROUD OF MYSELF EITHER... IT'S JUST I HAVE A WIFE AND 10 LIBERAL PARTY CRONIES TO SUPPORT.

Extraordinary opportunity?

I just read an announcement in Friday's *Washington Post* that U.S. President, George W. Bush is the featured speaker at the upcoming Calvin College Convocation. It's one of two such Convocation speeches Bush will give this year. The other is to be delivered at the U.S. Naval Academy. Meanwhile, Calvin College President Gaylen Byker is reported to have said, "We want our students to leave this place challenged and motivated to renew God's world in whatever they do. For our graduates to hear from President Bush as they prepare to leave Calvin and make a difference in the world is an extraordinary opportunity for them."

The question Byker leaves unanswered is: What is the "extraordinary opportunity?" This U.S. President, and perhaps more correctly, his administration has distinguished itself by lying to the world about the reasoning for its deadly foray into Iraq. Ostensibly the Bush Administration invaded Iraq as a matter of national security, often, but not always correctly, a translation for U.S. corporate global interests. The weapons of mass destruction (WMD): atomic, biological and chemical, presented so much danger to the U.S. and the world that the immediacy of a military invasion became paramount to efforts by much of the rest of the world to find a peaceful solution to the rule of a merciless dictator.

Now that even Bush and his administration are forced to recognize that the WMD were entirely the figments of overactive imaginations, he prides himself in having brought "freedom and democracy" to Iraq. By a certain measure that may indeed turn out to be correct, however, he repeats it so that the lie will be covered with a truth. While his immediate predecessor eventually told the truth after lying about having sex, Bush became a truth-teller only when it became necessary to cover-up his lie. While the first was the consequence of an abuse of a personal relationship, Bush's abuse has already resulted in the death of thousands of women, children and men and severely damaged the reputation of Americans around the world.

Even though it's not unusual to hear the suggestion that the invasion took place to protect U.S. oil interests, on Thursday April 20, 2005, I heard retired General Romeo D'Allard suggest that the U.S. objective has always been one of establishing a military perimeter around China, seeking thereby to limit its perceived expansionary interests. Given the configuration of the 'axis of evil' it seems as plausible an explanation as any. Regardless, there may indeed be an extraordinary opportunity for the 900 students to confront Bush directly with truth-telling as a means to cover-up lies. But, I wonder, do you suppose that's what Gaylen Byker had in mind? Perhaps someone ought to ask him to give a full and transparent account for asking U.S. President Bush to speak at Calvin College.

Jake Kuiken, Class of '66
Calgary, Alberta

Trap of compliance

Having read "Shifting visions of the Christian Life" by Calvin Van Reken in the May 2 issue, I just need to tell you and your readers how much I appreciate the insight of this article.

Especially during this period in Canadian history, when so many political leaders display such selfish behaviour in defiance of God's Word, we need to have our eyes opened. It is so easy for us to fall into the trap of compliance, when everybody around us says it is OK and it is the right thing to do, such as in the case of the redefinition of marriage.

Wake up oh Christian, this is a vile world and therefore I must be a soldier of the Cross and stem the flood of sin.

Jack DeVries
St.Thomas 519-631-2147

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60th anniversary

Ban the immigrant schools; save the Lord's Day

Harry der Nederlanden

One of our readers informed us that the immigrant ship, the Groote Beer, did not make its last trip to Canada in March of 1955 as was reported in one of our previous anniversary pieces. He ought to know because he crossed the Atlantic in that selfsame ship – in 1956.

[By the way, for those who don't know any Dutch, the ship didn't carry a lot of beer. The Dutch "beer" means "bear." Don't ask me why an immigrant ship was called Big Bear. Perhaps it's because in Holland the constellation we call the Big Dipper is called the Big Bear. Some immigrants might have felt as if they were crossing the ocean in a big dipper.]

My family crossed the Atlantic in a ghost ship too. The Volendam was supposed to have been sent to the wreckers a year earlier as well. I wonder how many immigrants were aware that they were crossing the mighty Atlantic in ships that were well past their expiry date? Some inspector must have declared them "not roadworthy" and then changed his mind. After all, it's not like they were shipping expensive stuff like machinery or electronics or cheese....

My apologies for any misinformation that I end up passing along in my retrospectives of back issues. I'm assuming that every jot and tittle that has appeared in *CC* over the years is absolutely true. That's my way of showing respect to my forebears at *CC* I know it's an illusion, but nowadays most of us are convinced that's what journalists excel in anyway – the creation of illusions.

This is Maranatha CRC shortly after construction as it appeared on the front page of CC, July 1, 1955. The caption reads: "This photo shows the beautiful building with the steeple at the front."

"Ban the immigrant Schools! Demand Ontario taxpayers," read the headlines for *CC*, March 11, 1955. A school inspector in the Sarnia area overtured the government of Ontario to ban the creation of schools by immigrants. He told the school authorities that he had met a principal from one of the "Dutch Reformed schools" who didn't speak English well enough to conduct a conversation.

The story made headlines in the *Sarnia Observer* and raised a ruckus. In a follow-up story, the paper interviewed Rev. Venema of Sarnia CRC, who informed the paper that not a word of Dutch was spoken at the school; all classes were conducted in English. The previous story had left the impression that the schools were planted to preserve Dutch language and culture. Venema invited Sarnians to visit the school and come see for themselves.

[The Sarnia rumors were an improvement over the rumors that attended the building of the Christian school in my home town of Beverly, Alberta. People said it was a reform school, that is, a school to straighten out juvenile delinquents. After it opened, some of the Christian teachers beginning their careers there probably wondered whether the rumors were true. We were not the most well-behaved students. We needed reforming.]

The principal of the Sarnia Christian school, Dr. Haalboom also explained to the *Sarnia Observer* that the school was intended not only for those of Dutch origin but for all Christians. He also emphasized that the school received no support whatsoever from Ontario taxpayers. So they had no reason to be outraged.

To some Canadians these clannish Dutch Calvinists must have appeared as strange in their behavior as the doukhobors. Why build your own schools when there were free public schools?

Several issues later (April 1, 1955), a front page article in *CC* asks, "Do our neighbors know what we're after?" The answer was clearly negative. The writer points out that the CRC community across Canada has been very busy planning and building schools in numerous towns and cities, but they haven't paid much attention to explaining themselves to their fellow Canadians.

The article raises another issue as well. The biggest obstacle facing the new schools, says the writer, is not a shortage of parental support or students, but of teachers. The shortage applied to the U.S. as well as Canada. Possible remedies considered are importing teachers from Holland, attracting Christian teachers from other denominations, and setting up a special fund to support those who wish to go to university to become teachers.

At that time, those graduating from Calvin College did not have their teaching degrees recognized in Ontario, nor did time spent teaching in a Christian school count toward teacher certification. Maybe we're getting ahead of ourselves, one pastor suggested.

We must not only make financial preparations, the writer suggested, but also "psychological" ones, by which he meant what we'd call marketing today. The episode in Sarnia suggested that those in the Christian school movement had not made it clear to their fellow Canadians why they wanted these schools. Most had the impression that the schools being built were either ethnic schools or church schools.

The article raised numerous other questions as well. Aren't we offending Canadians by suggesting their schools aren't good enough? Is it fair to assume that the public schools in Canada are like those in the Netherlands? Those early immigrants had a lot to think through as well as to work for and pay for.

Was it a time of "Giants in the earth," to use the title of a novel about another group of immigrants? Of course not. There were doubters and there were enthusiasts, and there were many supporters who entertained doubts. But they went ahead anyway.

In a *CC* editorial from the same time period, F. Guillaume quotes Hendrik van Riessen, who points out that if Lincoln had not believed in his calling, slavery would perhaps not have been abolished in the U.S. "To do what we must in this country," he continues, "we must believe in our calling and in the God who calls us. It is God alone who will do it. He will overcome the obstacles. He will turn setbacks into blessings."

"But that means everyone must pull together," he concludes. And that also means everyone should subscribe to *CC*, he adds. Honest! That's what he, one of our giants, said.

On March 30, 1955, The Back to God Hour held a rally in Cooke's Presbyterian Church in Toronto. It drew some 2600 people, more than half of them non-Dutch. Rev. Eldersveld spoke and the Calvin Radio Choir sang. The topic: Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary, too, had to learn to see Jesus not as her son but as her redeemer, said Eldersveld.

The reporter for *CC* concluded that Eldersveld clearly refuted the Roman Catholic heresy of the veneration of Mary. Was that Eldersveld's main purpose? Maybe not.

A short article about the activities of the Lord's Day Alliance reported that between 1891 and 1897 the Alliance managed to get a law passed in Toronto forbidding the operation of streetcars in the city on Sundays. I guess that meant people had to walk or hitch up their horses to get to where they were going – quite an enhancement in sanctity.

The last time someone was jailed under the Lord's Day Act was in 1937. He spent the night in jail for purchasing tobacco on Sunday.

The *CC* writer complains that although it is illegal to hire a gardener to do work for you on Sunday (in 1955), there's no law preventing you from doing the work yourself. He sounds as if he'd like the Alliance to lobby for a law banning Sunday gardening. If so, his crusade didn't catch on.

CC often carried stories relating an episode from Canadian history or from some other part of the world. One relates the story of the metis and the rebellion of Louis Riel. Just imagine, says the writer, had Riel and the metis prevailed, the Canadian prairie provinces might have ended up being Roman Catholic. One can almost see the writer shudder.

Another historical article is about Formosa. Taiwan has been in the news recently, as it was once again negotiating with China. In the 1950s Taiwan was still referred to as Formosa.

Did you know that the island, almost as large as The Netherlands, was once ruled by the Dutch? It was under the control of the Dutch East India Company for 38 years,

See **Anniversary** *p.7...*

Zomertijd is Betuwe-tijd!
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Spring

Sing in spring

Tom Polet

The flowers appear on earth;
The time of singing has come.
Song of Solomon 2:12

There is something about spring that sizzles the heart and makes you want to jump into a new adventure. I see it, driving down my street: my neighbors are preparing their Rvs with fervor and enthusiasm, anxious to get on the road. I see it in the children, who seem to be inebriated with spring fever, getting out their skipping ropes and releasing their pent-up energy. My wife looks longingly at the garden, itching to get the spade into the ground and plant her favorite flowers.

And me? Well, I'm planning to see where our next trip should take us – while filling the rest of the day looking busy.

Such is the joy of spring. And I marvel every time again by God's wonderful plan in designing the seasons, each with its own uniqueness and appeal.

The "kievit" or pewit is a lapwing bird of the plover family,

I remember spring 1941 back in Holland when, as a young boy, during the Easter holidays I went with some friends hunting for duck eggs. Each one of us carried a "pols stok" [jumping pole] which we used to jump ditches. As you know, the Dutch countryside is laced with ditches, large and small, and in order to traverse the fields you need a pols stok.

A pols stok is a long pole, about two inches thick and six to eight feet long. At the end is a round plate about twelve inches across to prevent the pole from sinking deep into the muddy bottom of the ditch.

Often ducks laid their eggs in a nest of reeds along the shores and we would jump from ditch to ditch until we got our fair amount for the day. Farmers encouraged us to go egg hunting partly because it controlled the exploding duck population. Today animal rights protectors and tunnel-vision environmentalists would, no doubt, protest such activities and kill a youthful enterprise. More often than not we would come home with wet feet and covered in mud. A dozen duck eggs pacified mother somewhat.

I was not the best ditch jumper, only now will I admit that I was clumsy, so my mishaps were par for the course. However, that did not prevent me from joining my friends on our escapades, nor was I shunned by them. For that I never thanked them; I do so now.

One particular spring day it was raining, which did not bother us because we were probably going to get wet anyway. It did, however, make the pole slippery and that was my undoing.

We were on our way back, our pockets full of eggs. One more ditch to jump. Extending the pole in front of me, I took a run for the ditch, plunked the pole with precision in the middle of the ditch and just as I was reaching maximum height I started to slide down the pole and fell backwards into the pasture.

This time the eggs did not survive the fall. My pockets became a bag full of scrambled eggs. That was not so bad, but there was a hole in my pocket and slowly the slimy residue began sliding down my legs.

My sympathetic friends led me home, singing all the while so the whole town would know: "Come and get it, scrambled eggs for free."

Needless to say my mother was not amused.

Another spring hunt involved a search for the first "kievit" egg. The "kievit" or pewit is a lapwing bird of the plover family, with a round head, a straight bill and long pointed wings. It is a common bird in Holland and one of the first birds to lay its eggs in the spring. The first person to find a kievit egg would immediately report it to the local police who would phone the Royal Palace to report the find. The next day the egg would officially be presented to the Queen, and the finder received as an honored guest by Her Majesty.

Picture hundreds of people flocking over the fields all across the country in search of the elusive egg.

I understand that this age-old festivity has come to an abrupt end. Under pressure of animal rights groups the government decided that one may search for eggs but they are not to be picked up. That sounds like a typical Dutch moralizing logic: "Look but don't touch." The police are now expected to catch the transgressors instead of reporting the first egg to Her Majesty.

The irony is that when the birds go south for the winter, the French will shoot them as a prize delicacy. In the meantime, the Dutch queen has to do without her favorite annual pewit egg. What pity.

In Canada, of course, we have our own rituals. Like the annual seal hunt, which gets the attention of animal lovers from across the world, giving us televised identity. I think, however, our government is a little more realistic in allowing controlled culling.

Then we have the celebrated groundhog day, a ritual that feeds the imagination of the prophets of the Farmers Almanac. We hated that animal, because in our first year in Canada, it found its way into our chicken coup and it did considerable culling of its own.

There is also another side to spring. A multitude of wildflowers display the wonder of God's tapestry of colors. The birds sing their new hallelujahs from the budding treetops and the winter weary fields eagerly send forth the first sprouts of new seeds. The promise of new life is everywhere and it touches our heartstrings. It all adds up to one great creation symphony.

The time of singing has come.

...Anniversary *continued from p. 6*

according to H. Fidder (*CC*, June, 1955). The Dutch built a fort on the island in 1624 to serve as a base for trade with the mainland.

In 1662, during a civil war in China, one of the warlords of Fukien province was forced to flee from the mainland. Landing on Formosa with a large fleet, he beheaded or crucified the Dutch traders, turned their wives over to his soldiers and sent the Dutch governor fleeing to Batavia (Indonesia). The Dutch governor there did not receive him with open arms. He tossed him into jail. A deep disappointment for our heroic governor.

Back to Christian schools, long a favorite topic in *CC*. In another1955 article, Rev. Jacob Uitvlugt warns that if we entrust our children to the public schools, a time will come when we will discover that we have lost an entire generation. We will not have leaders for our churches.

It is true, he concedes, that erecting Christian schools now looks like an impossible task. But a "full-blooded Calvinist" will not let that deter him. He knows: with my God I can leap walls and scatter armies. [War imagery wasn't taboo in those days, especially not to full-blooded Calvinists.]

He recalls early (prewar) days in Chatham, Sarnia, Hamilton and Windsor: "We came at a time when Canada was indifferent," he writes, "a time when Canada could do quite well without us. It took most of us 10-15 years before we could get a leg up in Canada."

What a difference now (1955), he says. Now there are many more opportunities. But the creation of Christian schools is proceeding far too slowly, he charges. Only three new schools have been built in Ontario since 1947. Why the delay? Because there are too many doubting Thomases among us.

"Listen, fellow Calvinists," he cries, "when you encounter one of these doubting Thomases, grab him by the shoulders and give him a good shaking. Maybe that will wake him up."

[Easy there, Dominee. Some of those Dutchmen are farmers from Friesland and Drente; they don't like being shook.]

The immigrants may not have been building schools fast enough to suit Uitvlugt, but they were quite busy building churches. In 1954, eight more CRCs were established in Canada for a total of 125 – up from 13 in 1948. But there were only 66 ministers to serve them.

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Meditation on Psalm 121
"The Lord will keep you from all evil"

Pope Benedict XVI

VATICAN CITY (Zenit.org) — Here is a translation of Benedict XVI's address given at his general audience May 4, 2005, held in St. Peter's Square.

I have decided to resume the commentary on the Psalms and canticles that are part of vespers, using the texts prepared by my predecessor John Paul II.

Psalm121, on which we meditate today, is part of the collection of "songs of ascent," that is, of the pilgrimage toward the encounter with the Lord in the temple of Zion. It is a Psalm of trust because in it the Hebrew verb "shamar" – to keep, to guard – resounds six times. God, whose name is repeatedly invoked, emerges as the "keeper" always awake, careful and solicitous, the "sentinel" who watches over his people to protect them from every risk and danger.

The song opens with the gaze of the one praying directed on high, "toward the mountains," namely, toward the hills where Jerusalem rises: from on high comes help, because the Lord dwells on high in his holy temple (vs 1-2). However, the "hills" can also refer to the places where idolatrous shrines rise, the so-called high places, frequently condemned in the Old Testament (see 1 Kings 3:2; 2 Kings 18:4). In this case there is a contrast: While the pilgrim journeys toward Zion, his eyes fall on the pagan temples, which constitute a great temptation for him. But his faith is firm and he has a certainty: "My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm121:2).

This trust is illustrated in the Psalm with the images of the keeper and sentinel, who watch and protect. There is also an allusion to the foot that does not hesitate (see verse 3) on the path of life and perhaps of the shepherd who in his nocturnal rest watches over his flock without slumbering or sleeping (v 4). The Divine Shepherd does not rest in watching over his people.

Another symbol follows later, that of "shade," which implies the resumption of the journey during a sunny day (v 5). It brings to mind the historical march in the Sinai desert, when the Lord went before Israel "in the daytime by means of a column of cloud to show them the way" (Exodus 13:21). In the Psalter, one frequently prays thus: "hide me in the shadow of your wings" (Psalm 17:8; see Psalm 91:1).

After the vigil and shade, there is the third symbol, that of the Lord who is at the "right hand" of his faithful one (v 5). This is the position of the defender, both military as well as in a trial: It is the certainty of not being abandoned in the time of trial, of the assault of evil, of persecution. At this point, the Psalmist takes up again the idea of the journey during a hot day in which God protects us from the burning sun.

But night follows day. In antiquity it was thought that moons rays were also harmful, the cause of fever, of blindness, or even of madness; that is why the Lord protects us also at night (v 6).

The Psalm comes to an end with a brief statement of trust: God will protect us with love in every instant, keeping our life from all evil (v 7). All our activity, summarized in the two extreme verbs of "going out" and "coming in," is always under the Lord's vigilant gaze, every act of ours and all our time, "both now and forever" (v 8).

We now wish to comment on this last statement of trust with a testimony from the ancient Christian tradition. In the Epistles of Barsanuphius of Gaza (who died around the middle of the sixth century) – a very famous ascetic who was consulted by many for his wisdom – the verse of the Psalm is recalled several times: "The Lord will keep you from all evil, he will keep your life." In this way, he wished to comfort all those who manifested their toils, the trials of life, the dangers, and the misfortunes.

On one occasion, when Barsanuphius was asked by a monk to pray for him and his companions, his answer included this verse: "My beloved children, I embrace you in the Lord, imploring him to keep you from all evil and to give you endurance like Job, grace like Joseph, meekness like Moses and courage in combats like Joshua, the son of Nun, mastery of your thoughts like the Judges, the subjection of enemies as to kings David and Solomon, fruitfulness of the earth as to the Israelites. May he grant you the remission of your sins with healing of the body like the paralytic. May he rescue you from the waves like Peter, and snatch you from tribulation like Paul and the other apostles. May he keep you from all evil, as his true children and grant you, in his name, what your heart requests, for the benefit of the soul and body. Amen" (Barsanuphius and John of Gaza, Epistles, 194: Collection of Patristic Texts, XCIII, Rome, 1991, pp. 235-236).

Nigerian church forced to move headquarters

Obed Minchakpu

JOS, Nigeria (Compass) – Devastation caused by religious conflict and the hostile attitude of Muslims toward Christian refugees returning to their villages in the central Nigerian state of Plateau has forced the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) to relocate its regional headquarters from the town of Wase to Kadarko.

"The decision to relocate our regional office and the church in Wase town was made by our church council following the complete destruction of all our churches in Wase town and the killing and displacement of the church members in the area," Dr. Pandang Yamsat, President of the Church of Christ, announced at an April 24 church service in the town of Langtang, Plateau.

In an interview with Compass last year, former President of COCIN, Dr. Alexander Lar, said that six of the church's pastors were killed in the town of Wase and more than 175 churches in the area had been completely destroyed.

First established in 1904 in Wase through the united efforts of the Anglican and other Protestant churches in Britain, the Church of Christ in Nigeria is one of the dominant churches in northern Nigeria today, with an estimated membership of over two million.

Yamsat said the relocation of the church's regional office aims to give the church's leadership time to strategize on how best to carry on evangelism in the town of Wase amid a hostile attitude of local Muslims towards Christians.

Due to concerns about Muslims preventing displaced Christians from returning to Wase and nearby villages, the Plateau State government sent members of the State Security Council to the area on March 14 to warn residents of the consequences of inciting more religious conflict.

"The Plateau State Government is concerned that although Christians displaced from Wase town and surrounding villages were willing to return to these town and villages, they are being prevented by Muslims in the area, who had illegally taken over their houses and farmlands as spoils of war," Michael BotMang, Deputy Governor of Plateau who headed the security council tour, told local Muslim leaders.

"This situation is unacceptable to the government of Plateau state and it violates our peace initiatives.

"All Muslims who have illegally taken over houses and farmlands of the Christians who fled their homes during the four years the religious conflicts here lasted should vacate them immediately or face the wrath of the law."

Security council members who accompanied the deputy governor on the tour of the crisis area included a brigade commander of the Nigerian Army, the police commissioner, the director of the State Security Service and comptrollers of customs, immigration and prison services from the state capital of Jos.

Dr. Haruna Abdullahi, the Emir of Wase, and Alhaji Saidu Musa, Chairman of Wase Local Government Council, responded by promising to work toward educating Muslims on the need to allow the displaced Christians to return to their homes.

Meanwhile, Colonel Abubakar Umar, former military governor of the neighboring state of Kaduna, told a press conference on April 4 that 10,000 people have been killed in Muslim-Christian clashes in northern Nigeria.

Col. Umar, a Muslim, blamed the violence on the implementation of the sharia Islamic legal system in 12 northern states beginning in 2001. He said he was compelled to speak out on the issue after Muslim leaders meeting in Kaduna in late March reportedly issued threats to launch a religious war in the country.

A member of the Nigeria National Assembly from Kaduna state denied that casualty figures are as high as Col. Umar claimed.

"Agreed there were violent clashes in some states," legislator Uzairu Suleiman Tahir said in a press statement issued on April 8, "but available records did not indicate such a large number of lives were lost. Where did he get these figures from?"

The 10,000 casualty figure is, in fact, conservative compared to other estimates. In March, COCIN leaders reported that over the past four years, inter-religious violence has claimed 84,000 in Plateau state alone.

The estimate of 84,000 dead appeared in a report released last year by the Plateau state government while emergency rule was in effect.

The confusing disparity in statistics, sources say, is due to the difficulty of verifying reported casualty figures and the tendency of government and religious leaders to distort information in order to serve partisan interests.

Woman pounding grain near Wase, Central Nigeria

Saudi police arrest 40 Pakistani Christians

Barbara G. Baker

ISTANBUL (Compass) — Saudi Arabia's religious police arrested 40 Pakistani Christians while the group met privately for worship in Riyadh.

The house church gathering was a joint Catholic-Protestant prayer service held weekly in Riyadh in recent years. It was hosted on April 22 in the Badeea district home of Saleem Sardar, a Pakistani Christian from Karachi now employed in Riyadh.

According to a Riyadh source, several carloads of muttawa (Islamic religious police) from the Committee for the Propagation and the Prevention of Vice raided the worship meeting just before noon on April 22.

Surrounding the house, the police halted the sermon being preached by a man identified only as Emmanuel. The muttawa then beat some of the worshippers, upsetting the furniture and breaking Christian artifacts and symbols as they searched through the house.

"The group had a wooden cross displayed at the front of the room during their prayer services," a Pakistani clergyman told Compass. "The police made one little girl in the congregation hold that cross, mocking her and taking photographs of her which appeared in a local newspaper the next day."

All the men, women and children present were detained and taken to the police station. By evening, everyone had been released except Sardar and Emmanuel.

However, police authorities reportedly refused to return any of the Christians' labor cards, used as official I.D.'s by the Kingdom's 6 million or more guest workers. All of the group's Bibles, hymnals, tapes and other Christian materials in the Urdu language were also confiscated.

At least two Saudi daily newspapers, Al Jazirah and Al Yaum, reported the raid the following day, declaring the practice of any religion other than Islam to be illegal.

"It was not clear what measures might be taken against the group," a Reuters article filed on April 23 noted.

According to the investigating police officer, identified as Lt. Col. Saad Nawafal al-Rashid, the Christian house church raid was part of a wide-ranging security campaign which has recently uncovered a prostitution ring, two home-brew alcohol factories and a variety of drug caches.

The Pakistan Embassy downplayed the incident to Compass today, insisting that only 20 or 25 Christians were arrested, none of them children. The spokesman declared that no reports of beatings or mistreatment had been received and stressed that all the arrested Christians had been released.

Although the embassy official acknowledged that Saudi muttawa had made the arrests, he said he could not confirm that religious worship was "the exact reason for their arrest. But there may have been some suspicion because they kept on coming together on the weekend."

"We have already taken up this matter with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here, to give us a detailed report," a community welfare officer in the embassy stated.

"We are very upset over this news," a Pakistan church leader told Compass today. "Why do Saudi Muslims have the right all over the world to build mosques and worship in them, when they refuse to designate places of worship for Christians who are guest workers in Saudi Arabia, or even allow Christians to meet quietly in their homes without being harassed?"

The Gulf kingdom refuses to allow any legal churches on its soil, although government officials defending this intolerant policy claim that adherents of other faiths can practice their beliefs in their own homes, provided they refrain from proselytizing.

Saudi Arabia has been sharply criticized by Western nations for fostering militancy and intolerance of other religions through its media and educational curriculum. Last September it was labeled by the U.S. State Department as one of eight countries guilty of "severe violations of religious freedom."

Church burned, Christians attacked in Manipur, India

Vishal Arora

NEW DELHI (Compass)– Christian leaders in the northeastern state of Manipur held an emergency meeting on April 22 to consider their response to an attack on a church in Thoubal district on April 19.

During the four-hour meeting, delegates formed a fact-finding committee to look into the attack on the Believer's Church. They also decided to form an Interchurch Peace Council and agreed to contact the Manipur State Minorities Commission to discuss the plight of Christians.

Believer's Church, situated on the outskirts of Lamding village in the Hindu-dominant Tentha Lamkhai area, was completely destroyed and four Christians were injured in the attack.

The church had already been attacked twice and a local court had ordered police to provide security while reconstruction took place.

Villagers have now asked members of the Believer's Church to abandon the premises or "face the consequences," the *Sangai Express* reported on April 22.

Compass spoke to Mohammed Kamaruddin, personal assistant to the Superintendent of Police in Thoubal district, who said that although the court had ordered local police to take action, "We do not know if the security was provided."

"We had arranged for security, but only as a patrol," said Mangal Jao Singh, another member of the superintendent's staff. "We had not deployed policemen (permanently) at the church."

The Rev. S. Prim Vaiphei, pastor of the Believer's Church, told Compass, "A mob of 200 Hindus overpowered (the patrol) and succeeded in launching an attack."

"The mob, carrying dangerous weapons like axes, sickles, pickets, sticks and torches, set fire to our church and violently attacked our church members belonging to the Meitei tribe in Lamding village, about 35 kilometers southeast of the capital city of Imphal.

"Mr. Romol, a local believer, was severely injured and had to be hospitalized," Vaiphei added. "But he is out of danger now."

Three other church members, Mr. S. Tombi, Mr. O. Tiken, and Mr. L. Thoiba, received minor injuries and were given basic first-aid.

In a letter to the Fire Brigade Department of Thoubal district, the Believer's Church claimed the loss due to arson and physical destruction of the church was about 445,000 rupees ($10,350).

The church building, which was still under construction, had a worship hall, kitchen and parsonage. Kitchen items, personal belongings and construction equipment stored at the building were damaged in the attack.

The attack was the third on Believer's Church since the beginning of the year. After a crowd of Hindus demolished the church November 23, 2004 while construction was underway, the Deputy Commissioner called a meeting between members of the church and the Hindu community. Because the Hindus strongly opposed the construction of the church, he prohibited all persons from entering the building.

This led the church to file a civil suit. The court then passed an injunction directing local authorities to provide a security guard for the church to ensure its peaceful construction.

The leaders who convened the emergency meeting last Friday hope that an appeal to the State Minorities Commission might bring a solution.

A member of parliament raised the issue of attacks on minority Christians during the March session of the State Assembly. Mr. Behring of the Bharatiya Janata Party informed the House on March 18 that Hindus were attacking Christians in the region. In response, the Chief Minister said he would take steps to end the violence.

Just over 737,500 Christians are among the total population of 21.6 million in Manipur, according to 2001 census figures.

Christians in India hail UN study on caste discrimination

Anto Akkara

New Delhi (ENI) – Christian officials in India belonging to a national forum of dalit groups have welcomed the appointment of two special rapporteurs by the United Nations' Commission on Human Rights to study the discrimination against low castes and others.

"We have broken the silence of the UN on the discrimination we face," said Vincent Manoharan, general secretary of the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), a coalition of more than 1,000 action groups of dalits who are people from all faiths treated as low castes.

On April 19, the human rights' commission adopted a resolution appointing two special rapporteurs to study "work and descent based discrimination."

Manoharan told Ecumenical News International on Wednesday the rapporteurs will study among other things the caste system in South Asia where there have been estimated to be 260 million dalits.

Dalits, meaning"trampled upon" in Sanskrit, were once known as untouchables. Although it is not legally sanctioned, they continue to be treated as low castes in caste ridden southern Asia.

The UN study would help draw greater international attention on how the caste system is "dehumanizing people in both public and private life," said Manoharan, a member of a Lutheran World Services committee.

"The family of origin [of dalits] determines not only the social status, but also impedes their choice of occupation and ability to participate in social and economic activities," said the dalit campaign group in a statement.

Dalits faced discrimination "in every sphere of life even in death with separate burial grounds," the group noted.

The caste system has been officially declared illegal in India but dalits are often expected to carry out degrading and menial jobs for upper castes.

"This is the greatest achievement so far in the history of the campaign for equality for the dalits," said Ruth Manorama, advocacy convenor for the dalit campaign group. She said the appointment of the rapporteurs would "put pressure on the government to enforce the various laws relating to equal rights for dalits which are seldom implemented."

LEENA MANIMEKALAI

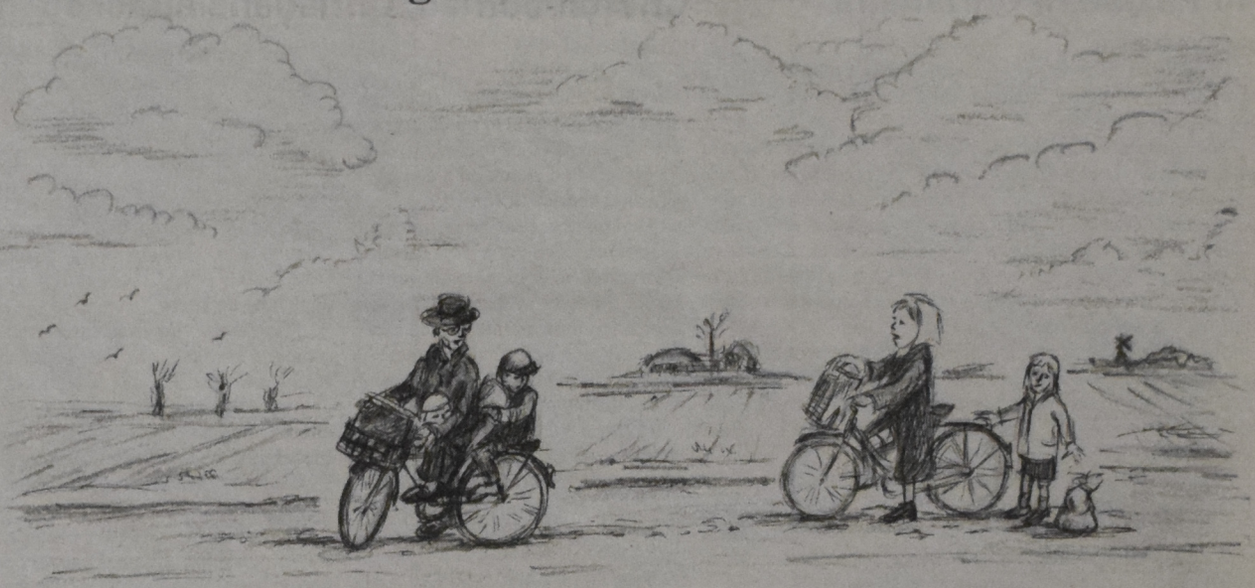
Sexually assaulted women speak out on camera, despite fear of retribution during the filming of ***Parai****, a 45-minute documentary film about the status of Dalits, in the village of Siruthondamadevi.*

War remembrance

The Hunger Winter of 1945: setting out

Sietze Jongsma

[Last issue Sietze Jongsma wrote about hiding under the floor during the Nazi razzias. In this segment, unable to work or to feed his family, he decides to leave his home in The Hague.]



My wife, Ankje, and I had often talked about leaving The Hague for Friesland, but our chances were so slim, it looked impossible. There was practically no transportation; what there was had been taken over by the krauts.

Ankje spent entire days looking for ways to arrange our flight to Friesland, going everywhere she could think of for information and contacts. No matter where she went, however, she ran into insurmountable difficulties.

As our hunger grew sharper day by day, we examined other options. I still had an excellent bicycle with good tires. Ankje, too, had a good bicycle – but without tires. So I decided to try to get hold of a set of useable tires.

We were fully aware that this was no easy task, but in view of recent events it seemed the only option.

I had not shown myself out-doors for a couple of weeks be-cause German soldiers lurked in the most unexpected places. But one evening as it was beginning to grow dark, I ventured out on the street. After stealing down several little-used streets and alleys, I rang the doorbell at a house where I thought I might have a chance of success. A woman cautiously opened the door, and seeing that I was safe invited me in.

The entire family was sitting together in the living room around a makeshift oil lamp that cast a weak, mysterious light around the room. Hurriedly I explained my plans, conscious that curfew was quickly approaching.

The man, an amateur bicycle repairman, said he had a couple of used tires, which although not new, could be made serviceable. It didn't sound very good to me, but something was better than nothing. At first, however, we could not agree on a price, because he didn't want money. He was willing to sell the tires – but only for food.

We still had some potatoes at home, but we were very sparing with them, using only two per day. Since I could not find any other way to get the man to part with the tires, at last I agreed to give him our potatoes in trade.

Having extracted a promise that he would deliver the tire in good condition in exchange for our last potatoes, I stole homeward again, arriving scant moments before curfew time.

At home we made further plans. There were so many different things that might possibly happen, and overcoming all the obstacles was not going to be easy.

First, we had to leave our home and all our costly possessions behind unguarded. We weren't sure whether we'd ever see them again.

Secondly, I had to leave behind a good job with good earnings.

Thirdly, I was putting myself in danger. Although I had survived the razzia, the road to Friesland was long. In view of my age, the chances of being arrested on the way were high. Fortunately several of my relatives were active in clandestine operations, so this was not an insurmountable obstacle. I began by letting my beard grow.

The next day I set out to obtain a false identification document. However, the address I had received was wrong, so the person there couldn't help me right away, but he did promise to get me false papers in a few days.

We managed to rent our house to some neighbors on the condition that we could store all our furniture and things in one of the rooms, so that the renters could use the rest of the house. Since these neighbors were honest people, we figured our house and things would be safe till we returned. The job wasn't a huge obstacle, for no matter how much you earned, if you couldn't buy food, it made no difference.

So it began to look as though we would be able to make the long and difficult journey and set a date when we would leave – Monday, December 18.

My wife began packing every-thing she thought we might need on our journey and during our stay in Friesland. Part way through the packing, however, it became clear that it was too much. It was turning into a mountain. We had two huge suitcases and a large bicycle bag, but they weren't enough. We stuffed a couple of pillow cases too.

But how were we going to transport five people, two suitcases, a bicycle bag and two stuffed pillow cases on two bikes?

What was needed was a sturdy carrier. I went to the market, where all kinds of second-hand stuff was for sale, to look for one. I spotted one as soon as I arrived – just what I needed.

"Sir, what will you take for that carrier?"

"You can't buy it for any amount of money," he replied. "The only thing I'll accept is food. It will cost you one loaf of bread or a pound of peas."

There I stood. What to do. The seller would not budge; he would not take money for the thing I wanted.

I decided to return home and talk it over with Ankje, for the stakes were high. After a short conference, we decided to by the crucial carrier for a no less crucial loaf of bread.

Meanwhile, the date was already Friday, December 15 and my promised identification card had not yet arrived, nor had my bicycle tires.

Once again I ventured out to investigate how matters stood. I was assured that the promised i.d. card and bicycle tires would be there. But, although we were busy making preparations, we were very worried that they wouldn't be.

Saturday went by without a sign of either the i.d. or the tires.

Early Sunday morning the bicycle with its new tires finally arrived, and we immediately began packing.

The front carrier of my bike held the two suitcases and a pillowcase. On the bar I had attached a small seat for Dutsina, [our two-year old]. The rear carrier held the bicycle bag, but Henk [eight years old] had to sit there too. So I was pretty well loaded down.

My wife, Ankje, had a large bag

VOORLICHTINGSBUREAU
VAN DEN VOEDINGSRAAD

Het gebruik van suikerbieten

DE VERVANGING VAN AARDAPPELEN DOOR SUIKERBIETEN

RECEPTEN MET SUIKERBIETEN

Wartime recipe *from the Dutch Food Council, explaining how sugar beets can be used as a replacement for potatoes*

dangling from her handle bars. Annie would sit on the rear carrier along with a bag and a stuffed pillow case.

We were acutely aware that, given this load, this would be an exceedingly difficult journey. But hunger was much more difficult, so we were determined to take the risk.

By now it was Sunday after-noon, and still no i.d. Without a false i.d. the risk was too high, so I tried to find out what was happening. It was already dark by the time someone came to the door. At last the long-awaited fellow had arrived who would help me get a new i.d.

We retreated to the back room, where to the dim light of a candle the man produced a blank i.d. After copying the required information from the old card, he transferred my photo, took my fingerprint and all was ready. My age had been increased by ten years and my occupation altered from insurance underwriter to Supervisor of Mental Hospitals.

The man asked for nothing. It was all done in the name of resistance. Everything was ready for the big journey.

That night we slept very little. All sorts of thoughts spun through our heads. We got up very early Monday morning. After sharing the last meager meal in our own home, we prayed together. It was almost 8 a.m. and we were ready to begin our journey. A few close friends came to see us off. We wheeled our bicycles out the door.

They were so heavily loaded, however, that getting started was very difficult. I tried first. Our worst fears were realized, for before I had gone five meters I found myself lying on the road with my two children and my overloaded bike. Riding the heavily loaded bike was impossible.

What now? We were at our wits end. Should we give up the idea of traveling to Friesland and calmly accept what awaited us here?

But we had already done so much, we were determined to undertake the journey no matter what. Although they contained things we thought necessities, we decided to leave behind one suitcase and one pillowcase stuffed with supplies. We had no other choice.

Once again we straddled our bicycles. Even now it wasn't easy with three on one bike plus a sizeable load. However, once we got some momentum, things went better. There was very little traffic, so we made it to the outskirts of the city without any problems.

We had not gone very far, however, before we had our first setback. The rear tire of Ankje's bike, one of the tires we had bought with our last potatoes, had sprung a leak. So it was not a very auspicious beginning.

But I quickly unpacked the repair kit from my bicycle bag and began patching. The tire had been doctored in numerous ways to make it "serviceable." It was not in the best of health. Fearing the worst, we pressed on.

But we didn't get very much further before we began to experience the first symptoms of exhaustion. Not having enjoyed a decent meal in several weeks, we found ourselves in a weakened condition. My wife especially found herself severely weakened.

When we had traveled some 10 km. she was dead tired. Luckily it was a beautiful winter day, so we got off our bikes and walked them for awhile. But this way we were not making very good time. We had planned to make it all the way to Amersfoort that day, and if possible to Nijkerk. So after walking awhile, we once more climbed back on our bikes and began pedaling, this time at a slower pace.

But after going another few kilometers, Ankje was forced to stop once more. She simply couldn't go any further....

Continued in next issue

[Translated by Harry der Nederlanden]

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

"Spiritual bypassing" – the caring of the earth

After the last tree is felled, Christ will come back.
James Watt, Ronald Reagan's first Secretary of the Interior

We can't afford to dismiss the American religious right as loony tunes.... The best response is to get up, get out, and work for progressive change.... This is not time for religious tolerance. That only allows these seriously deluded people to expand their suicidal mission. And take us with them.
Recent comment by Alicia Priest

April 23, 2005, was Earth Day and I noticed there is a universal spirituality around the care of our planet Earth in Canada. It provides common ground for many diverse spiritual groups from various traditions and walks of life. However, with rise of the Religious Right in the U.S.A., I believe Christians are becoming suspect.

Michael Byers, the head of the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of B.C. believes President Bush's environmental policies to be "a recipe for global disaster." While he primarily blames American values such as rampant individualism and unbridled capitalism as responsible for their environmental crimes he also holds the Religious Right responsible for the mess. He believes if the U.S.A. continues on its reckless course the long-term viability of our own species might also come into question.

Deluded Christians

I am not in the habit of bashing the U.S. Yet, I choose to use the above quote by James Watt as a helpful example of "spiritual bypassing" as written about in my last two columns.

On the surface, Watt could be saying we do not need to take responsibility for our environment because when we have finished pillaging and plundering the planet Jesus will return to create a new heaven and a new earth – for Christians only, of course. He is making a statement about something unpleasant and difficult and is not taking personal responsibility but seeking comfort by suggesting Jesus will return – hopefully, just in the nick of time so we do not have to suffer the folly of a ravaged earth! All components of "spiritual bypassing."

In light of the Watt quote, can we blame the secular world for getting their dander up against a strong fundamentalist group like the Religious Right, especially since religious conflicts and violence are on the rise? Does James Watt seem deluded to you? Do you think he could have promoted personal responsibility, showed some concern for fellow human beings or simply talked about what is right and respectful in regards to God's creation?

At the same time the popular book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* by Jared Diamond makes the collapse of civilizations through obsessive religious demands an eerie possibility, as was the case of Easter Island 300 years ago.

Victims or perpetrators

Which brings us to the above quote of Alicia Priest. She sounds deadly serious about making sure North America is not going to the dogs. She is also not in favour of religious freedom if it is means we are going the way of Easter Island. And so the winds of discrimination and persecution may soon be blowing our way.

However, even in this situation we may choose to "spiritually bypass" this problem and merely accept this yoke of suffering. Does Scripture not tell us this is part and parcel of the eventual end of the world after which Jesus will surely come to make all things new?

And so, we will prefer to see our ourselves as persecuted victims waiting for the return of Jesus rather than the perpetrators we really are by not dealing more effectively with our responsibilities in regards to God's creation.

Still, by now we know we can do it differently. The bottom line in avoiding the phenomenon of "bypassing" is a helpful framework for Christian spirituality as suggested in my column of April 18th, 2005. There are, of course, with a little research, other definitions that may appeal to us. In either case, the joy lies in journeying together to discover the challenges and complexities of living in a diverse and daunting world interlaced with themes of grace and hope.

Arlene Van Hove is now on sabbatical from Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

Note: Doubts have been raised about the authenticity of the quote from James Watt. The (in)authenticity of the quote does not, however, affect the thrust of the column. – ed.

These monuments, known, as "moai" are some of the most incredible ancient relics ever discovered. The people of Easter Island called themselves the Rapa Nui. It remains a mystery where they came from and why they disappeared.

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Christian living

Shifting visions of the Christian life Part 3 of 3

Calvin P. Van Reken

Evaluating the change in vision

One important way that a minimal version of the new vision is an improvement over the old vision is that it doesn't permit Christians the error of withdrawing into separate communities, disengaged from the problems of the world. This is an important improvement. However, there are at least three reasons why the old vision, the one slowly being displaced, is better than the stronger versions of the new one. First, the older one has much better Biblical warrant. Second, the older vision has a much better grasp of reality – it is more true. Finally, surprisingly, the older one is actually more effective in encouraging Christians to a life of service. A word on each of these.

Biblical defence of the old vision

Since I have already tried to lay out some of the biblical basis for the older vision, here I will simply make two points. A word or two about the way in which Scripture is creation-affirming, and then what Scripture says about the unfolding of history.

When the Bible affirms creation, it is almost always speaking of the natural world that shows the wisdom and power the Creator. There is very little positive said about human accomplishments or cultural progress. Psalm 19 is characteristic. In the first two-thirds of the psalm God's governance of the sun, moon, and stars by his law is praised. The Psalmist doesn't praise the sun, moon, and stars as such, but God who orders them. But when it comes to humanity, the loudest note is one of concern. "Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults."

The creation is good, but we are sinners through and through. So our hearts latch on to both some evil things and some good things; and we love them inordinately. God's good creation and human "creations," both good and bad, very easily become something loved more by us than God himself is, and so we become worldly. Thus the biblical vision is that the world is a dangerous place for people of faith. Paul writes the church at Corinth to be pure and holy: "... Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (2 Cor. 7.1) The concern is that Christians live holy lives; the danger is that our hearts will become attached to things in the world.

With respect to reforming culture, Scripture tells us that what we should expect persecution, even tribulation as the end times unfold. Societies will turn against Christians. There is no hint, no suggestion of optimism that before Christ returns we can set things right or even that things will get better. We are told just the opposite. We are told it will be as in the days of Noah when the Lord returns.

Adrian Ostade, Prayer before meal

Optimism about this world in Scripture is only warranted because one trusts in God. Scripture neither suggests we should reform culture nor does God call us to that work. Scripture does not lay out for us what a Christian culture would look like, it does not give us any single strategy for achieving one. I would argue that there isn't any such thing as a Christian culture. Instead, Scripture simply calls us to live trusting and obedient lives, to do good, and to look forward to a future blessedness.

The optimistic view of our successfully transforming human culture has little support in Scripture. God's kingdom will come in its fullness, not because of us, but because God has promised and he is faithful.

Reality check on the new vision

Now let me explain why the older vision is more true. As we become more and more comfortable in this world we focus less and less on what is truly important. A lifetime of even ninety years is a mere grain of sand on the shores of eternity. If we accept the illusion that this life now is what is most important, we will never understand the martyrs; we will never understand the Christian life as one of self-denial, not self-indulgence. The joy and pleasures of this life, however wonderful and abundant, are not worthy to be compared to what God has in store for those who endure to the end.

This new vision also is unrealistic about what good we can do. Consider: we cannot reform ourselves significantly, as those who have struggled in their Christian walk know from long experience. So why do we imagine we can reform culture? I think we have taken the self-esteem lessons to heart, and now we may think that we have arrived at a level of faith and spiritual maturity where we can now take on the worst evils our adversary has devised. We have forgotten how much of the old flesh remains at work in us. We have forgotten a Calvinist reading of Romans 7. The Lord knows that we are neither good enough nor wise enough to undue sin and its effects to any extent.

This is not to say that we shouldn't engage in doing good or that we should separate ourselves from the human community. It is to say that our engagement with the secular world needs to be undertaken with serious circumspection. We need to be less naive about spiritual risk. We need to be less confident that we can immerse ourselves in secular activities without spiritual damage. We need to be more realistic about our own frailty. Paul writes the Thessalonians: "Test everything; hold fast to the good; avoid every kind of evil." Thomas Dorsey hit the right notes:

> Precious Lord, take my hand,
> lead me on, help me stand;
> I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
> through the storm, through the night,
> lead me on to the light; take my hand,
> precious Lord, lead me home.

Kingdom activity and the old vision

Finally, some may fear that a return to this old vision will result in a reduction in kingdom activity by Christians. But this is not true. It was men and women living under the old vision who started the Christian Reformed Church, who established Calvin Seminary and later Calvin College. They built dozens of Christian schools and sacrificed to send their children to them. They started World Missions, the Back to God Hour, The World Home Bible League, Rest Haven, Pine Rest, Bethany, the Holland Home, not to mention Dordt College, Trinity College, and Reformed Bible College. The reason why the old vision energizes such enormous contributions is that it reinforces the fact that our lives here are transitory. We are headed on to a better place, so we don't need to hoard the stuff we have now.

I know a missionary who with his family lives in one of the most remote places on the face of the earth. No air conditioning, no plumbing, no running water, no western doctors, this is no place anyone would choose to live unless they had a vision of an eternal city so wonderful that all earthly riches and conveniences paled in the light of that hope. His primary concern is not that the people he lives among will enjoy more western conveniences, but that they will share in the glorious future that God has in store for his children. His message is not a message of earthly success, but eternal joy in Christ Jesus. He is pointing them to a city whose architect and builder is God.

The young man Saul had a marvelous career ahead of him in the Jewish synagogue and Sanhedrin, a life of power, privilege, with opportunities to reform Jewish culture. But he passed on it. In the light of the hope of eternal glory he counted such a career as garbage. And this makes the point: without a vision of glory, of streets paved with gold and a mansion over the hilltop, we lack the motivation to make the kind of sacrificial choices that bespeak a faith that is alive.

The new vision can generate a real problem: it aims us at this world and the good we can do. So many come to love the world and the things in it. In a word, we become worldly. Then, if we love this world, there's no reason to press on. The pilgrimage ends. This, here, now, is home. We stop looking for that eternal city whose architect and builder is God.

Conclusion

We are pilgrims here, and we look forward to the day when Christ will return and all things will be made new. In the meantime we should rededicate ourselves to trusting him and following him faithfully. You students are here because you have believed the gospel, and want to serve in a gospel ministry. The gospel is this: that those who believe in Jesus Christ will live forever because of what he has done. We are called to proclaim this gospel of grace. Through the preaching of the gospel, human lives can be turned from a future with no hope to one of unbounded joy. "The main battlefield for the kingdom is not the open ground of the public arena, but the small clearing of each heart" (Yann Martel, adapted).

If we lose the old vision, we are in danger of forgetting what is really most important. We are in danger of forgetting that we are pilgrims on the way home. We are in danger of forgetting that the poorest Kenyan living in a shanty in the ghetto of Nairobi who is a Christian is infinitely better off than Donald Trump.

> So let us walk with the Lord,
> in the light of his word,
> and see what glory he sheds on our way.

In this school year, may the prospect of eternal joy in the heavenly city inspire each of you to pray and work faithfully.

This essay and others are posted on CRConnect. See www.crconnect.org

Caring/Sharing

My brother Oliver

Christopher de Vinck

My brother Oliver was a "vegetable" for 32 years. The best guess is that he endured severe brain damage before he was born. He was blind. He had no intellect. He could not chew, talk, or respond.

For 32 years Oliver was on his back in his bed. My father shaved his beard. My mother fed him breakfast and lunch. My brothers and sisters and I took turns feeding Oliver dinner.

Often my sister and I were the lifters when it was time to give Oliver a bath. I remember how it was. My mother prepared the water in the tub, and the towels in the bathroom. My father directed my sister and me. Anne climbed onto Oliver's bed and sat on the headboard and gently slipped her hands under Oliver's armpits. I stood at the end of the bed and cradled my arms under Oliver's legs, and then my father reached under Oliver's back, and the three of us pulled my brother up out of the bed and slowly carried him through the room.

I remember my mother calling out from the bathroom, "Don't bump his elbows against the door sill." When my father, sister and I reached the door, I remember how nervous I was not to knock Oliver's elbows into the door sill.

Oliver was heavy. We carried him down the long hallway. His skin was smooth. He breathed calmly as we stepped into the bathroom.

"Anne, walk carefully around now to the back of the tub," my mother said as my sister slowly walked through the little room, bending laboriously as she firmly held Oliver. "Chrissy, now swing his legs along to the side of the tub."

"Mom, we've done this hundreds of times."

My mother smiled. "Okay, Anne, lift him over the edge, and Chrissy you do the same thing, but place his legs gently into the water first."

I lifted Oliver over the edge of the white tub and placed his legs into the warm water. Each time I see marine biologists slip rescued dolphins back into the ocean on television, I think of Oliver's white, little legs slowing submerging into the bath water.

"Anne, now lower his shoulders and head."

Oliver sank into the tub. His head rested against a towel my father held. And then my sister and I watched as my mother bathed Oliver. She lathered a blue washcloth with pink soap and sponged Oliver's body, and as she bathed him, she spoke, sometimes saying to us, "Oliver is grateful that you helped him today," or she would sing a French lullaby as she washed Oliver's hair.

My father would cup his hands around Oliver's forehead so that the shampoo would not seep into my brother's eyes.

Oliver was in a perpetual, comatose state unaware of his surroundings, incapable of any intellectual or emotional function that would be considered normal, except for one thing: he laughed. Sometimes when my family and I were asleep, we would all be awoken in the middle of the night to this deep, husky laughter. Oliver would laugh and laugh, and that is all.

Oliver died in my mother's arms of pneumonia. As he pulled in his last breath and exhaled into silence, my mother whispered, "Goodbye my angel."

After feeding him, bathing him, loving him for 32 years, "Goodbye my angel."

The quality of a person's life is not determined by the present state of comfort and worthiness. The quality of a person's life is determined by the cumulative results of that life.

I think back to those days when a boy and a girl carried their brother down a long, dark hall. I think back to a father holding a towel, to a mother bathing her son and singing "Frere Jacques. Frere Jacque. Dormez vous? Dormez vous? Sonnez les matines, sonnez les matines. Ding, dang, dong! Ding, dang, dong!"

Are you sleeping, my brother Oliver? Are you sleeping?
I guess you could have called him a vegetable.
Are you sleeping? I called him Oliver, my brother.
Morning bells are ringing. Morning bells are ringing.
You would have liked him. Ding, dang, dong!
We have the power to sit and nurture all that grows around us.
Ding, dang, dong!

Christopher deVinck is one of the Consulting Editors for the Journal of Religion, Disablity, and Health. *He is author of a book called* The Power of the Powerless, *a book about growing up with his brother, Oliver. Christopher teaches in the English and Arts department of a high school in north Jersey, and has had op ed pieces published from time to time. Christopher de Vinck* <devinck@sprynet.com>

The write stuff

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

I spent a couple of afternoons this week e-mailing numerous Christian publications on behalf of "Write! Canada." It made me long for the warmth of mid-June and the familiar fellowship of the annual Christian writers' conference in Guelph, Ontario. I thought back to my very first conference (in the days when it was "God Uses Ink"), and reminisced about some of the good times I've had and friends I've made.

About nine years ago I sent for my first God Uses Ink brochure. When it arrived I studied it, thought how great the conference looked, and promptly tucked it under my desk blotter. What business did I have at a writers' conference? The following year a brochure came in the mail without me asking for it. I took that as divine prompting. With trembling hands I filled out the registration form, wrote a cheque and mailed it before I had time to lose my nerve.

As an afterthought I entered the novice contest that year, mostly because the only recent writing I had done was my "weekly column" (the running grocery list I keep on the fridge door), and the monthly cheques to pay farm bills (where creativity is frowned upon). The topic was a character description of any person, alive or dead, real or fictional. I wrote about Jack. No shortage of material there.

Driving to the conference I seriously questioned why I should go. How could I rub elbows with real writers? Still, I had paid the fee and couldn't very well waste the money. I picked up my registration packet and tried desperately to get my name tag to hang straight. I fiddled with the elastic string and the tag snapped back, hitting me squarely in the nose. At that moment a woman passed by and smiled. "How's it going?" She asked. Later I learned she was N.J. (Nancy) Lindquist, author, speaker and leader of my continuing class – Getting to Know the Writer in You. Doubtless I had made a memorable first impression.

At the Friday night banquet they called all the novice contestants up to the front of the hall. I stood there with rubbery knees, wishing I could disappear. Bill Fledderus began reading the winning entry. It took a couple of sentences before I realized the words he was reading were mine. The audience actually laughed at what I had written. Jack had come for the banquet and sat grinning proudly at me.

What amazed me most was the supportive atmosphere of the conference. Seasoned writers, fledglings and wannabes alike had congregated for a few days. Together we listened to a keynote speaker, split up for classes at various levels, joined again for meals and chit-chat. I soaked it all in, knowing in my heart that I had found my place among kindred spirits. I went home from the weekend ready to write the great Canadian novel, or at least an article or two.

Faith Today ran the essay about Jack on their website. A few weeks later Bert Witvoet, then editor of *Christian Courier*, called and asked if he could use it. I sold a few more articles, and the following year Bert offered me the chance to write a regular column.

One year I taught a workshop for beginners at GUI. At the end of the class a woman approached me and said, "That was great. I'm soooo inspired." I humbly thanked her for the compliment and she added, "Yeah, I figure if you can do it anybody can!"

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada sponsored God Uses Ink for the first seventeen years. Staff from *Faith Today* magazine did most of the organizational work. A few years ago the baton was passed to us as writers, and The Word Guild was born. Thanks to the dedication of many volunteers, and especially to the vision and commitment of Wendy Nelles, and Nancy and Les Lindquist, Write! Canada is now bigger and better than ever. This year our speaker is Phil Callaway, award winning author and humorist.

So if writing (or editing) is something you've always enjoyed, or think you might enjoy, let me encourage you to visit www.thewordguild.com and check out the conference information. Or you can write to The Word Guild, Box 487, Markham, ON L3P 3R1 (telephone: 905-471-1447). They'll send you a brochure.

Don't stick it under your desk blotter and forget it. There are tracks for everyone, from rookie to pro, journalist, poet or fiction writer. Editors roam freely in their natural habitat, just waiting for your "novel" ideas. Manuscript critiques are available. There are night owl and early bird sessions, good food and great fellowship. You'll find me working at the bookstore. Don't be shy. Trust me, if I can do this – anybody can!

Heidi VanderSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont. Her email: hmvanderslikke@ hotmail.com

Some Word Guild finalists

The Word Guild 2005 released the short list of finalists for Canadian Christian Writing Awards on April 28. The winners will be announced on June 17 during the Write! Canada conference.

The list is far too long to publish in its entirety, but we give here a few names you might recognize.

Our apologies to the writers who publish in *CC*. We don't submit any articles for the simple reason that there's an entry fee. Otherwise I'm sure *CC* readers would spot more familiar names.

Our congratulations to all the nominees.

Books – Culture: Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmaat of Toronto for *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire*, published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill.

Young Adult Book: N. J. Lindquist of Markham, Ont. For *More Than Friends*, published by That's Life Communications, Markham, Ont.

Feature Article: Jon Dykstra of Edmonton for *Four Stupid Arguments Against Gay Marriage and One Good One*, published by Reformed Perspective, Win.

Column/Editorial/First Person Essay: Jon Dykstra of Edmonton for *On the Outside Looking In* and for *Screwtape's Same Sex Suggestions*, published by Reformed Perspective, Winnipeg, MB

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema of St. Catharines, Ont. For *Once Upon A Christmas*, published by Christian Home and School, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Beatrice Vandervelde of Toronto for *Dusk at the Cottage*, published by Christian Courier,

Biblical wisdom

All things exist by God's good pleasure

A.A. van Ruler

I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. (KJV)

I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him. (NIV)

Ecclesiastes 3:14

The first thought that arises from this word of the Preacher is this: we should live and think through reality as it is and as it happens so deeply that we experience it as a series of God's acts. Reality is "everything that God does." In being, we bump into the doings of God.

It is not true that nothing exists. If that were true, there would be no problem. But something does exist. That simple fact poses all the problems with which man has struggled in all ages, both in religion and in philosophy.

We come to ultimate certainty and clear-sightedness only when we begin to realize that in all being and happening it is God the Creator forcing himself upon us.

If we acknowledge and confess this, we bring to its most radical expression the simple fact that something exists and not nothing.

A person, however, does not come to this point overnight. He has to begin to see it gradually, says the Preacher. Usually we avoid this radical way of putting it, even when we are preoccupied by these questions. In one way or another, we try to skirt them. When push comes to shove, we take refuge in apathy. As a rule, we humans seldom arrive at the final seriousness and the ultimate beauty of that one simple fact about reality.

This is because we do not dare to refer our creatureliness wholly to the Creator and to view it as his act. As a result mankind has strayed into numerous religions and philosophies. Only Israel had the courage to accept, on the one hand, the radical separation of the Creator from his creation and, on the other hand, the radical orientation of created reality toward the Creator.

This is reality seen from the final, ultimate perspective. This reality that we stand in and experience is fully real. It is the only reality that is given to us, and it is an act of God.

This insight of Israel was taken over in the Gospel and was infused into the flesh and blood of Christianity through the church.

Along with this comes another awareness: "I know," says the Preacher, "that whatever God does endures forever."

The Preacher does not mean to say that created reality as such is eternal and, thus, transcends the boundaries and forms of time. He only means to say that what God has done can in no way be altered. Things are as they are and happen as they happen, that is, as God has done them. This does not mean that they are in themselves necessary. On the contrary, they could have been and happened quite differently.

But that they in fact were as they were and happened as they did rests in God's freedom: in his free omnipotence it pleased him to do them this way and not another. Therefore, nothing can be changed – not because of necessity, but because of God's freedom.

Here we broach the subject of God's unchangeableness, but in a very specific way – in the sense of the unchangeableness of God's acts, thus, not in terms of an unchangeableness in eternity but in terms of an unchangeableness within time.

With our Greek thought patterns, we have often seen this in terms of an unchangeableness in eternity. However, the biblical truth of predestination and of God's unchangeableness only acquires a tragic status if we displace the unchangeableness of God from time and push it into eternity. Then predestination easily becomes an inscrutable fate. Then freedom has been eliminated and replaced by necessity.

However, the unchangeableness of God's acts in time doesn't sit well with us inwardly. We don't accept it at a snap of the fingers. What matters is that each of us make his or her peace with it. This is the art of living – to make peace with being as the act of God, to take pleasure in that which pleases the Lord God.

To get to this point, a person first has to overcome a huge barrier. The barrier is this: that a person cannot add to or subtract anything from what God does. This, too, is part of the awareness of reality that the Bible wants us to see, to be converted to.

Man likes to alter things. He is only happy when he is changing things. He can do so in an idealistic way – by longing for the future. In the future things will be different; then we will be happy. He can also do it in a romantic way – by dreaming of the past. In the past things were different and we were happy. Both idealism and romanticism, however, are attempts to add to or subtract from what God does.

A person can get so busy running between romanticism and idealism, between the past and the future, that he has no time to be happy in the present. In fact, he can never become happy this way. For where else can a person be happy than in the present?

The Preacher nails us down in the present and to reality as it is, to its unchangeableness, and to God's good pleasure, which shines forth with blinding brightness from it all. He also adds that God deliberately arranged things in this way for a purpose. God did it so that we would bow in fear before his face.

This is the heart of all wisdom and of all heartfelt happiness: the fear of the Lord, the fruit of a Godly life, the respect for God in his sovereign good pleasure, the awareness of one's own creatureliness. As long as we do not realize that God is God the Creator and that we are his creatures, we will never really get to this point.

Also involved in being a creature, without a doubt, are such things as being a co-worker, a friend, a child, and an image-bearer of God. We should never cancel ourselves out or eliminate ourselves. We should never say, we are "only" men and "only" creatures.

But this does not alter the fact that being a creature most certainly contains elements of insignificance, total dependence, and of revolving about God's sovereign good pleasure.

As human beings, we need not diminish ourselves into nothingness, but neither should we inflate ourselves into gods. We have to walk the line that runs right in between: recognizing ourselves for what we are, namely, creatures, while obeying, respecting and honoring the Creator for what he is, namely our Creator. Only in this will we as creatures find peace and happiness – in giving praise to our Creator.

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Pedal power thrives in Germany

Isabelle de Pommereau

FRANKFURT, GERMANY – Like many of Germany's 5 million unemployed, Jens Indorf trudged out each morning in a futile search for a job. His year-long quest ended when he took a job as a Velotaxi driver. Now he gets up each morning with a spring in his step – a product of days spent pedaling his tricycle taxicab along the banks of the Main River, under the blossoming cherry trees, and past the tall glass towers that are the trademark of continental Europe's banking capital.

Mr. Indorf is part of a new fleet of taxi drivers that have flourished on the gridlocked streets of Germany's big cities. Pedal-powered, mouse-shaped Velotaxis, or "cult-flitzers," as they are called here, ride streets, bike paths, and pedestrian zones to transport tourists and city dwellers. They've transformed Indorf's life. And they could transform the way cities fight car pollution.

"I love to sweat," says the former car mechanic, hauling his 308-pound steel tricycle through nooks and crannies unreachable to buses and taxis. One of 60 seasonal Velotaxi drivers in Frankfurt, Indorf pays 6 euros ($7.72) a day for the vehicle, insurance coverage, and repair service. The rest he keeps. He earns between $50 and $130 a day.

Relaxing in one of the two upholstered seats in back, passenger Yvonne Spiess says she felt bad at first about having somebody physically work to transport her. Velotaxis evoked frail men running with rickshaws in developing countries. But Indorf convinced her otherwise.

"Now I'm seeing my city from a different perspective," says Ms. Spiess, a dance therapist, as her cabdriver pedals his way through the city's municipal square. "I feel closer to it."

Equipped with 21 gears, disc brakes, and an electric auxiliary engine rechargeable by batteries, the $9,000 Velotaxi is a far cry from India's rickshaws.

The cab is the brainchild of Ludger Matuszewski, a former Daimler-Chrysler project manager from Berlin. Bored with his office job, he dreamed of fulfilling a social mission. His idea? Bring to Berlin an environmentally friendly alternative to expensive taxis and cars. He came up with a concept of a modern rickshaw. To finance the project, he sought advertising.

Thus Mr. Matuszewski created not only a new mode of transport but also a new mode of advertising. Velotaxis are often used for group functions like weddings.

The Velotaxi firm dominates the European market. In Germany, where registration is difficult, it is the only company authorized for bicycle transport.

It took years of clearing bureaucratic hurdles for the cruisers to be allowed to ride city streets. Under German traffic laws, transporting people on bicycles was forbidden. But Berlin's Senate, police, and taxi associations finally agreed that the "cult-flitzer" could be integrated into the city's traffic flow. Germany's highest court later ruled that transporting people on bikes was legal. Today, with the federal environmental department backing the idea, Velotaxis face few bumps in the road.

The Velotaxi boom comes at a time when Germany, under pressure to comply with new European Union regulations governing pollution limits, has been scrambling to cut down on fine-dust particles emitted by diesel cars.

"Velotaxis have been a great eye-opener," says Christoph

See **Pedal Power** *p. 16....*

Body stewardship

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

I asked my former colleague at CSS, Anita Horlings, to write this article. She now manages her own Business/Ministry called S.I.M.P.L.E. Fitness (www.simplefitness.ca). Anita and her family are serious sports and exercise advocates! Read this article and you'll understand why.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

A Christian's desire is to follow God's teachings. Many Christians are faithful in following God's spiritual directives, but many fail to follow God's directives concerning their responsibility to care for his temple. Given the right perspective, Christians can be motivated and inspired to protect their physical bodies against the harmful health hazards that are besieging us.

Three distinct principles can be pulled from the above Scripture: ownership, occupancy, and choice.

Ownership

Scripture clearly reveals that your body does not belong to you. Yet, the responsibility for the care of our bodies resides with us. As Christians, we need to recognize that we need to be good stewards of our bodies. God expects us to protect and feed our body properly and to exercise regularly. He wants us to use our body to honor him, because he owns it. As professing Christians and good stewards, we have the responsibility to carefully maintain internally and externally the temples God created. We should continually and consistently strive to develop all its dimensions – mental, emotional, spiritual and physical.

Occupancy

We read in the Old Testament about the tabernacle and the temple of Solomon. They are described as the dwelling place for the Spirit of God. These structures were made especially beautiful. Solomon's temple was a showpiece and its beauty was unparalleled by any other structure made by man. It really was a place to honor God.

Through Christ, God tells us that his Spirit will dwell in our bodies, his temple. This means our flesh and blood is an earthly dwelling place for the Spirit of God. "Don't you realize that all of you together are the house of God, and that the Spirit of God lives among you in his house? If anyone defiles and spoils God's home, God will destroy him. For God's home is holy and clean, and you are that home." 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (LB)

What an overwhelming privilege and responsibility we have to house the Spirit of God. The fact that God indwells our bodies is reason enough to keep our bodies physically fit and, like the temple of Solomon, a suitable place to show honor and glory to him.

Choice

Many Christians are obedient to God's spiritual laws but fail to glorify God in their bodies. They let false pleasures like overeating, alcohol, smoking and lack of exercise dominate the physical body. Disregard for God's directives and neglect of the body ruins God's temple. We have to make a choice: neglect our body's physical needs, which may lead to poor health, or glorify God in our bodies, which leads to good health.

Remember that we are the Body of Christ. He left us to represent him in this world. His Spirit has come and dwelt among us, and the world will know our God mainly by our representation of him. Our representation will be greatly enhanced if we fully develop the potential he has created in us. The result will be the development of a whole person – a healthy, happy servant of God. "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well…" 3 John 2

Each one of us has been designed to be a flesh and blood temple of God. When we are driven by a spiritual conviction we will be better motivated to care for our bodies and become faithfully fit. Our bodies must work properly if we are going to have the energy to enjoy the spiritual challenges that God has planned for us.

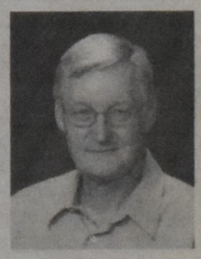
Steward's Tips

How do we begin to protect our "temple"?

1. Start by eating properly. Use the Canada Food Guide as a great place to start. Then change your eating habits so that your body is taking in food every 3 hours – start with a good breakfast within your first hour of waking. By starting off with a good breakfast your metabolism starts working right away. By continuing to eat "good choice" food every three hours your body never needs to save or store food as fat for "later".
2. Stay away from fad diets. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
3. Begin *Active Living*. If you do not currently exercise, start by walking for ten minutes a day. Increase this to one hour – but the good news is it doesn't have to be a continuous hour. Accumulate your hour through the course of the day– take the stairs, park further away from your work building/store, make a couple of extra trips up/down the stairs (instead of the "be smart, save your strength" attitude, etc.
4. Find something you enjoy doing – if you enjoy it, you'll stick to it! And do it with a buddy.
5. Here's to your health! Have fun.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Stewardship and Giving for Children



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Opinion

Islam, a house divided

Harry Antonides

Free Muslims' efforts are unique; it is the only mainstream American-Muslim organization willing to attack extremism and terrorism unambiguously. Unfortunately most other Muslim leaders and organizations believe that when it comes to terrorism, the end justifies the means.

(Free Muslims Against Terrorism)

When Daniel Pipes, the outspoken critic of militant Islam, recently addressed a crowd at the University of Toronto, he stressed two important points. One, Islamic terrorists constitute a small minority of a billion-plus Muslims; two, the militant Muslims are the problem while the moderates are the solution.

This theme has been echoed by many other commentators. The problem is that moderates have been slow in speaking up publicly. There may be a number of reasons for this reluctance. One has to do with fear of being denounced and even threatened by the militants and their enablers, of whom there are not a few. The latter are well organized and savvy in their use of the media, including the Internet, in order to present Islam as a religion of peace and to denounce their critics as hate-mongers and racists.

The good news is that there is an increasing number of Muslims who are prepared to take on the militants and their apologists. It is vital that their courageous public stand be recognized and at least morally supported.

An unusual Canadian Muslim

Dr. Khaleel Mohammed, professor of religion at San Diego State University, who specializes in Islamic and Arabic studies, was born in Guyana, South America, and now is a Canadian citizen. He received his M.A. in religion at Concordia University and his Ph.D. (Islamic law) at McGill University. He has lectured at mosques and churches and at universities in North America, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Mauritania and Yemen.

Speaking recently at a lecture series co-sponsored by the Winnipeg Zionist Initiative, Mohammed cautioned his audience to realize that the successor to Arafat is really of the same mind as Arafat.

What must be a major offense to Arabs and Muslims is his conviction that the Koran teaches that the land of Israel belongs to the Jews. In an interview published in *FrontPage Magazine* (June 3, 2004) he elaborated:

The idea that Israel does not belong to the Jews is a modern one, probably based on the Mideast rejection of European colonialism etc, but certainly not having anything to do with the Qur'an. The unfortunate fact is that most Muslims do NOT read the Qur'an and interpret it on the basis of its own words; rather they let imams and preachers do that for them.

Dr. Mohammed continued this interview in the same forthright manner, pointing out that he is often subjected to angry critique from leading Muslims. After he presented a speech in Montreal, he was publicly accused of being a racists for saying that 95 per cent of contemporary Muslims are exposed to anti-Semitic teaching. When he requested space for a response to that charge in the *Montreal Gazette*, his request was refused.

Despite the influence of the Muslim fundamentalists, Dr. Mohammed is hopeful that Islam will have a reformation, but he thinks that will have to come from Muslims in the West. He predicts that "the voices of women will be loud and pivotal in that reformation."

Free Muslims against terrorism

On March 11 a number of Muslim clerics from the Islamic Conference of Spain issued a strong condemnation of Osama bin Laden and his murderous followers, declaring him to be an apostate and an infidel for violating the teachings of Islam.

The American-based organization FMAT enthusiastically endorsed this declaration and stated (on its website) that they want to go a step further "by offering a road map to winning the ideological battle against all terrorists who justify their crimes by relying on a fascist misinterpretation of Islam." They continue:

Now that these faithful and brave Spanish clerics have broken the ice and have declared an authentic Jihad against the al Qaeda evildoers, other terrorists and suicide bombers, we request the Muslim clergy and Muslims in general to reiterate their support for this condemnation without equivocation or explain their refusal to do so.

In redefining Bin Laden, all terrorists, including ALL suicide bombers as criminals we offer the following Resolution of Condemnation:

a) we denounce the ongoing attack on America, the West, Muslims and all innocent people of the world. This attack is not "Jihad" (Holy War) but a heinous crime and a mortal sin of Hirabah (Unholy War which is forbidden "war against humanity);...

c) we affirm that unless these evildoers cease their evil ways, turn themselves to the proper authorities, we will oppose them, expose them, fight them with writing, speaking, and organizing for they are criminals, and enemies of Muslims and all civilization;...

g) we affirm that it is a moral, ethical and Islamic duty for all Muslims to uphold these declarations by aiding and abetting established authorities around the world in apprehending these mufsidoon (evildoers) and muharibun (unholy warriors).

This hard-hitting declaration concludes by stating that this is not just the opinion of the authors but represents what they know to be the true teaching of the Koran. They insist that their effort is nothing less than taking back their religion "from the criminals who hijacked it and encourage all Muslims around the world to stand up to the terrorists, fanatics and extremists because no Muslim can afford to remain silent. The civilized world is counting on us."

Democracy requires freedom of religion

The same website of FMAT touches on a variety of related topics in a number of clearly written position statements about modern Islam, democracy, economic development, Israel/Palestine, and "Don't Blame the 'Jews.'"

It explains that Muslim extremists cleverly adopt popular Arab and Muslim causes in order to draw peaceful Muslims to their side. In that context FMAT points out that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the single most important issue that unifies the entire Muslim and Arab world.

It is this "liberation" of Palestine that every terrorist group exploits to obtain legitimacy. Even Saddam Hussein responded to the world's request that he leave Kuwait by demanding that Israel first leave the West Bank and Gaza. And Osama bin Laden also invoked the Palestinian issue to justify the September 11 attacks on the U.S.

Behind this preoccupation with Palestine, FMAT detects the even more ambitious goal of creating a "fundamentalist Muslim empire made up of every Muslim nation." This objective, they believe is based on the delusion that modernity is a threat to Islam and that if the Muslim community would only return to a strict interpretation of Islam, then the problems of the Muslim world would be solved. But it is this kind of "paranoia, ignorance and fear that inspired and supported the Taliban and the creation of a medieval society in Afghanistan," according to FMAT. In contrast, it is unequivocal in its rejection of the terrorists' goals and methods.

The FMAT believes that democracy is needed in the Arab and Muslim world. But they realize that such is not possible without first establishing freedom of religion and thus a separation of mosque and state. They write that Islam is a religion, not a blueprint for the creation of a modern state:

The Koran does not contain sufficient guidance for the creation of a state. All modern states which have been founded and inspired by Islamic extremists are fascist, reactionary, impoverished and do not boast the features of democracy.... If fair and free elections were held tomorrow, the majority of Arab countries would probably elect totalitarian leaders with an intolerant pro-Islamist agenda. The election of extremists would spell death to democracy. We must first expel Islamic extremists and terrorists from Arab and Muslim societies before democracy sweeps the region.

A Canadian Muslim refusenik

Irshad Manji is the most visible and outspoken Canadian Muslim whose book, *The Trouble with Islam*, has been translated into more than a dozen languages, with plans for an Arabic version to be published in Baghdad. Manji is uncompromising in her call for change. She writes: "Through our screaming self-pity and our conspicuous silences, we Muslims are conspiring against ourselves. We're in crisis and we're dragging the rest of the world with us. If ever there was a moment for an Islamic reformation, it's now."

Not surprisingly, she has evoked strong feelings of support as well as rejection among fellow Muslims. She acknowledges with gratitude that it is only in the free West that she is able openly to express her true convictions. But even here she is not without danger to her own safety. She posted* this chilling warning from an irate Muslim: "I swear by Allah that some brothers are planning to take action against you ... Just as Van Gogh was taken care of. This is your last warning."

Dr. Mohamed Elmasry, president of the Canadian Islamic Congress, dismissed her book as inconsequential and the author as a self-loathing Muslim who lacks the credentials to write about Islam.

But Professor Khaleel Mohammed, who wrote the foreword to the U.S. edition of Manji's book, has a very different opinion. He said that as a learned Islam scholar he should hate Manji because her book will make Muslims stop listening to a scholar like him. He continued: she says things about Islam that he wished were not true; she has a big mouth; she is a lesbian, all reasons aplenty to hate this woman. Then he concludes:

But then I look into my heart and engage my mind, and I come to a discomfiting conclusion: Irshad is telling the truth.

Not a bad endorsement of a book that has stoked the fires of controversy and made a significant contribution to a much needed public discussion, especially within the Muslim community itself.

* See www.muslimrefusenik.com

Harry Antonides:
hantonides@sympatico.ca

Pedal Power

...continued from p.15

Rau of the European Academy of the Urban Environment, based in Berlin, which helps cities reduce traffic. "They've increased people's awareness about other forms of transport."

It was at the Hanover Expo 2000 that the company gained recognition outside Germany. Now its pedicabs have become hot sellers abroad – operating in 22 countries, including Spain, the Baltic States, Saudi Arabia, and Japan.

This article provided by Christian Science Monitor's news service.

Conviction: to thrive – again, or for the first time

SUSTAINING Pastoral EXCELLENCE

Looking back

In a previous article on *character*, the first of four traits of leadership articulated by the Christian Reformed Church's Leadership Development Team, we looked at a past near-disaster in Hopeful CRC. That (fictional) conflicted congregation was a place where otherwise morally upright leaders lacked sufficient moral intelligence and maturity to face each other openly and honestly. Using the metaphor of a construction project, the first part of Hopeful's story showed that, even with the Gospel of Christ as a foundation, a framework built from weak leadership timber could not withstand winds of bickering or penetrate a foggy purpose for the church's future.

From building to sailing – a new metaphor

As we explore *conviction*, the second leadership trait that congregations can develop, we switch to a new image of a ship on a voyage. In brief, good ship *Hopeful* had foundered, was listing and in danger of sinking. Yet, strength and depth of historical *conviction and vision among leaders and congregation* imaginatively helped right it and send it on its way. Here's the story.

Early in *Hopeful*'s long-range ministry voyage, the leaders – planning team and council – failed to recognize and to face disagreements. Over a year disagreements deteriorated into ever more secret and damaging conflicts among leaders and "crew." Crucial trust was lost. *Hopeful* was filling from the inside with its own bilge. (That's impossible in physical ships, but the oddest things happen when spiritual, "metaphysical ships" run into trouble.)

When a vessel threatens to sink, even the best crew might panic; no one wants to lose her spiritual soul from self-inflicted scuttling. Some fearful officers and crew members donned life jackets, launched lifeboats in sadness, discouragement and anger for nearby ships. Some were within, others outside the CRC fleet. *Hopeful's* long-range planning voyage stopped dead in the water as the remaining crew started bailing and pumping in emergency survival mode.

Using available emergency gear

Where do a congregational crew and remaining leaders go when a voyage comes up short? When all hands feel literally at sea, maybe sinking, like Peter who took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the waves instead? Here is where *conviction and vision* can not only lift sinking sailors one by one, but help also to plug leaks in our souls and start the ship's engines and pumps again.

"Leadership: A Working Definition" asserts that, "many CRC congregations are struggling for direction and desperately need wise, strong leadership" (p.14). Yet, to plug the leaks of weak and ineffective leaders is not a job for lone-ranger rescuers who cruise in to weld on miracle patches and then scoot off to similar troubled craft. Rather, "effective Christian leaders are self-sacrificial and give their lives to turning their biblically shaped vision into reality" (p.14). A corollary is this: Effective leaders do not work in a vacuum, but draw on the strength and resilient tradition of Christian faith, history and community.

In the case of foundering *Hopeful*, near sinking gradually gave way to a steady, effortful, if undramatic righting, that found its centre keel in the fact and power of Christ's resurrection. Purposeful, patient and courageous crew members who stayed with *Hopeful* dug out tested and tried gear from lockers they had forgotten since the heady days *Hopeful's* launch. Instead of becoming one of many late 20th century ecclesiastical *Titanics*, *Hopeful* steadied her sinking beam, with leaders and followers fixing their eyes and hearts on the Source of Life.

Despite the unexpected internal storm, *Hopeful*, a "good ship and true," found within herself an unexpected "captain and crew, well-seasoned," as Gordon Lightfoot referred to the doomed crew of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* 30 years ago. *Hopeful* was not, however, doomed. It was, as the Rankin Family – other Canadian folksters – crooned, destined to "rise again"– largely because of communal *conviction* based on Christian faith, history and future vision.

Finding the leaks in our souls

When a church is in trouble, denominational protocols provide for a counsellor from its own classis. That pastor cooperates with council and search committee to look for a new ship's captain. In *Hopeful's* case the chair of the calling committee herself had almost lost her conviction and vision. When approached by the counsellor and council to head the calling committee, she hesitated for several months, taking rest, a personal spiritual inventory and calling council to intercede for her and the church while she made her decision.

Later asked what persuaded her to risk the spiritual stability, she said, "I looked back at the history of the church and both back and ahead to Christ. Then I realized *I* wasn't taking a risk; Christ was offering himself – not to die again, but to lift our congregation and me from waves of hopelessness to live up to our *Hopeful* name." Evidently Galatians 2:20 played a huge role in convicting her and sealing *Hopeful's* internal leaks: Christ had died; the congregation had died about as much as humanly possible with Christ. Now it was no longer they who lived, but Christ who lived in them.

Crew and temporary captain headed to the pumps, donned protective suits of prayer, study of Christian gospel resurrection, brushed off the dusty need for discipline and accountability in their own meetings and planning. They were not set to abandon ship, but to steady *Hopeful* and follow again the charts the congregation had determined years before were really God's routes for their voyage.

Recognizing that much of the congregational crew was seasick and demoralized, a new emergency crew took charge. Previously untested replacements urged tired and battered council members to rest. With renewing trust among once suspicious crew and officers, most members slowly turned *Hopeful* not to just any safe harbor, but to seas where powerful, steady Holy Spirit winds were surely blowing. *Hopeful* slowly, faithfully caught that by now unfamiliar breeze.

Hopeful's crew reviewed their formerly adopted vision:

- plan a building according to ministry needs;
- become a regional church not recruiting crew from other churches, but developing their own crew from growing young families;
- nurse back to health older, weaker members tossed about by the winds of internal conflict;
- provide a safe but moving haven of community of worship, Bible reflection and sanctified earthiness in worship to incorporate creeds and confessions in songs, readings and messages;
- restructure the second service to meet in members' homes for study and fellowship, once a month gathering as a full congregation for a potluck and worship.

A new captain as a bonus

All of this occurred over a six-year period. A new building waited four more years. And what about a new captain/pastor? Aren't we pastors needed to steer congregational ships through waters known and new, calm or rough? The resident crew and officers decided to reset direction *before* calling. Most important was the congregation's effort to raise tired, blurry eyes to Jesus who was marching on before, across the waves, calming seas of discouragement and inter-personal conflict.

In a denomination that already ten years ago was starting to feel the crunch of pastoral shortages, *Hopeful* deliberately sought a pastor with good sea-legs, years of experience, sufficient energy to recognize exhaustion in crew members, and deep trust in Jesus' power to make weary people dream of flying like graceful, tireless pelicans, and not scavenging eagles or squawking gulls. *Together* the pastor/captain and congregational crew now look at the surrounding seas that had calmed after years of choppiness and to this day stride eagerly through the seas where the Holy Spirit blows them where it will.

James C. Dekker *currently captains Covenant CRC in St. Catharines, Ontario, with necessary help from both experienced and new officers and crew. In spare time he restores wood-canvas canoes, of which he owns seven, only two of which can actually float right now.*

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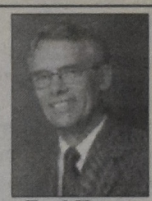

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Opinion

Popes, politics, judges and many rooms

Religion is very much the rage nowadays. Even on mainstream TV I noticed a new program called "Revelations," which tries to deal with the last book of the Bible, Revelation, because end times too are beginning to catch on. And then there was the continuous coverage on the Vatican, which is keeping the focus on the Roman church in living color.

I happened to catch the announcement of the new Pope. As soon as I heard the name "Josephus," I knew the choice and turned off the TV, but not before I heard Ratz... and that initially interpreted my feelings about the man. A safe bet this Pope. Pious. Polite. Priestly. A politician too, be it a reluctant one, seemingly not at all at ease in the limelight, where he looked endearingly vulnerable.

Pope Benedict is a conservative. Most old men are, although I must confess to an anarchistic streak. And there's where my tension arises: Jesus once said that he'll make everything new. The church calls herself the 'Body of Christ,' which makes her mandate also 'to make all things new.' This requires worship to explore ways to renew creation. Prayer is asking for wisdom there.

Faith for me is a four letter word spelled 'dare.' Dare to live so that the world we live in is made better, made to last forever.

Symbols of heaven

Papa Benedictus loves the church too. Deeply and sincerely. But where does Jesus' simplicity come in? Somehow his church – the church everywhere – is stuck-in-the-rut with richly-colored robes, impressive rituals, a pyramid hierarchy, marvellous sanctuaries, centuries' old traditions. Nothing down to earth.

All things supposedly symbols of heaven, a place where my Bible tells me that "God lives in inapproachable light, whom nobody has seen and nobody can see." That's why it's a mystery to me why heaven is seen as the goal. The entire idea originates in Greek philosophy and is not biblical at all. God didn't create this planet to have us migrate somewhere up in the wide blue yonder.

Somehow I was moved by the words of Benedictus in his first mass as pope. It's evident that his new status seems to have changed him overnight. Or has it? No longer is he the theologian cardinal insisting on pure doctrine? Now the pastor-to-the-world Pope with a message to all? And sombre words they were: "The earth's treasures no longer serve to build God's garden for all to live in but have been made to serve the powers of exploitation and destruction."

I am sure he still thinks that Catholic Christianity is the only answer. Other religious traditions may embody some truths, but somehow the Roman version is the ultimate.

As a protesting Protestant, I think the Bible is more generous. Here's why. John 14 – that's a chapter in one of the Gospels, and not another Pope – tells me that the house of the Lord has many mansions. The original Greek says 'monai pollai' which literally means 'many rooms'. I had 6 years of Greek so I have a basic knowledge of the language. What does that mean: many rooms?

First, a general observation. Nobody can fully know God. We only see in part, "through a glass, darkly," as the King James has it. When Jesus talks about "many rooms" then he in essence is saying: "Look folks, it's impossible to fathom all God's ways. We do know, by observing his creation, that he loves diversity. Every leaf on every tree in the world is somehow different. No snowflake that floats to the surface is quite the same. Each human being is unique and does, because of that, think and act differently. From this we can conclude that God dislikes conformity.

"If you believe that God fashioned it all, that his immense love is evident throughout the universe, then you fit into one of the 'many mansions,' whether your religious home-room is Islam, Judaism, Christianity, or Aboriginal thinking. Then you will take your place in the House of God, his creation, for eternity."

Pope Benedict would label me a relativist, which I am not. Of course there is truth. The problem is that we can only detect a small portion of this. So I keep on probing, treading carefully, walking the Way, knowing full well that it'll take all of eternity to find all the answers.

I do want to come back to a question I asked in an earlier column, when I wondered whether the new Pope would be a Jonah. His predecessor never was. People or Popes concerned exclusively with heaven don't care enough for the earth. A case of divided loyalties.

God loves the cosmos he made. There's where we have to put our energy too. Archbishop Rowan Williams is pointing that way. The head of the Anglican Church recently said, "We need to start by recognizing that (because of our neglect of the biosphere) social collapse is a real possibility," echoing the Jonah refrain: "Repent or die." If it is a sin to kill and to steal, then surely it is a sin to destroy the ability of the earth to support life now and in the future. The Ten Commandments tells us to honor our parents, the only religious rule with a promise attached: "so that you may live long and do well." How can our children and grandchildren remember us with gratitude, when we have squandered their endowment?

The Anglican Archbishop is a true Jonah. Pope Benedict could turn out to be one too. The real religious question is: "Will we listen? Can we still change course?"

Religion-dominated statecraft

We live in interesting times, where religion is taking curious twists. A few years ago I was in Louisville during the week of the world-famous Kentucky Derby. Landing there I saw a big Boeing 747 – no longer the world's largest plane, the Airbus A380 is, but still huge – with Saudi colors and lots of Arabs in flowing white robes walking around. The Saudis love their race horses and fly them first class around the world. We had come for a funeral.

Driving to the cemetery I saw another massive structure. A cross on top a megachurch. I was told that its weekly collection is about $240,000 with an average attendance of some 12,000 faithful, drawn from a wide radius to hear, what? Well that Sunday – I happened the get hold of that week's bulletin – Dan Quayle had been the guest speaker. You may remember him as Father Bush's Vice President, a man who had difficulty spelling 'potato' when visiting a school.

That very same church was in the news again. Hard to believe, but there's another civic war brewing in the USA. Not about slavery, this time, but about religion. The Republican party there is in the process of being transformed from the party of the elite to the party of the elect.

The nomination of judges is used as a casus belli – a reason for warfare. Apparently the Democrats have refused some of the people proposed by President Bush. Which is their right. The Republicans did exactly that when in 1995 they regained control of the Senate. Then they blocked 35 percent of President Bill Clinton's nominees to the federal appeals bench. Many did not even receive a hearing. By contrast, President Bush has, since 2001, nominated 34 candidates to the federal circuit courts, 10 of whom the Democrats have blocked with filibusters – or just under 30 percent. But this is supposed to be different.

Now this political tool is called 'religious persecution,' and a special day, Sunday April 24, was set aside as 'Justice Sunday,' to mobilize the masses. So thousands crowded that megachurch in Louisville, while others watched via satellite in hundreds of churches nationwide. Still more tuned in online and through Christian TV and radio. Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, shouted: "We will be disobedient altar boys! We won't be told to shut up and give it over to the secular left! Who are they to say that I don't have a right to freedom of speech?"

When the crowd heard that they jumped to their feet, whistling and clapping. Apparently many ordinary Christians in the USA believe that believers don't have a right to freedom of speech. This went on for an hour and a half, with the cream of the Christian Right taking turns.

One of the most prominent speakers was Dr. James Dobson, famous for his "Focus on the Family" – spare the rod, spoil the child – movement, whose radio programs, videos, magazines and books reach some 200 million people worldwide. The language he used was downright apocalyptic. Dr. Dobson bombarded, "I think this – the appointment of judges – is one of the most significant issues we've ever faced as a nation, because the future of democracy and ordered liberty actually depends on the outcome of this struggle."

After saying that the Supreme Court is responsible for "the biggest holocaust in world history" – the legalization of abortion – he continued: "For 44 years, the Supreme Court has been on a campaign to limit religious freedom. We do have a right to participate in this great representative form of government." From the way the crowd cheered, you'd have thought someone had told them they didn't.

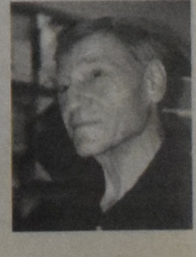
This is all part of an opening folly of a development totally alien to Canada and Europe but already played out in Saudi Arabia and Iran. America – just as these Muslim countries – is seeing an attempt to have religion-dominated statecraft installed, courtesy of a militant movement in Christian politics, composed of a curious mixture of Pentecostals, Southern Baptists, conservative Catholics, charismatics and other evangelicals.

Dominionism

They may be at war doctrinally but share a deep-felt belief that America is to become a Christian nation. This movement, known as "Dominionism," aims to build the kingdom of God in the here and now, and seeks to be an agent of God, while seeing all liberal thinkers – like me – and political opponents as agents of Satan. Some even want to have the Ten Commandments re-introduced, with the death penalty for such moral crimes as sodomy, blasphemy and witchcraft. Of course, homosexual and lesbian organizations and publications would be banned, just as under the Nazi regime in Hitler's Germany.

No wonder that books by Ann Coulter sell in the millions. In the April 25 issue of *Time Magazine* she is quoted; "God said, Earth is yours. Take it. Rape it." About Islam countries: "We should invade there, kill their leaders, and convert them to Christianity."

My Jesus often spoke of the poor and marginalized. He healed one of his captors wounded by Peter, who then denied his Lord three times because he was deeply disappointed that the Man who fed thousands and raised the dead, rejected an earthly 'dominion.' Not until the cock crowed – foretold by Jesus – did it dawn on Peter that his Lord did not desire the mantle of secular power. Why then are there still so many 'dominion-seeking' Peters around?



Previous columns and other writings can be seen on 'hielema.ca.'
Bert Hielema (bert@hielema.ca)

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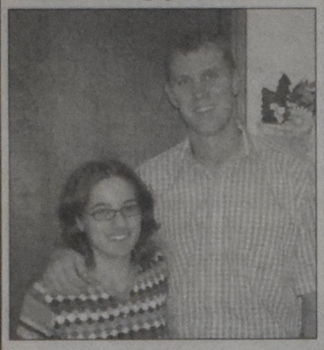

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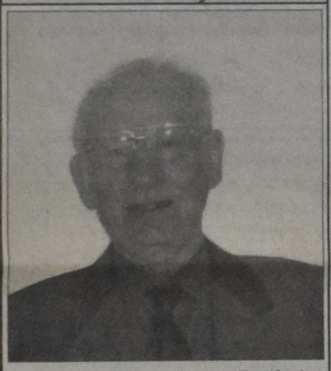

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Bradford ON L3Z 2H1

Personals

Man, 40 years old, would like to meet a Christian woman in her 30s. Reply to:
File 4747
c/o Christian Courier
1 Hiscott St
St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7

Classified Rates

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION
Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.
RATES (GST added to all rates listed)
All personal and family announcements: $16.00 per column inch (P.I.) (2 " wide)
rose@christiancourier.ca
Display advertising re. businesses and organizations: $18.20 P.I.
ads@christiancourier.ca

Anniversaries

1955 2005
Bowmanville, Ont. Mississauga, Ont.

Ps. 95:1 *Come let us sing for Joy....*

On May 21, 2005

GEORGE AND MIEKE VAARTJES
(nee **Westerman**)

with praise to God, hope to celebrate
their **50th Anniversary**
with children and grandchildren.

We would be pleased if you would help us celebrate this joyful occasion.

Open House on May 21, 2005
from 2 - 4 p.m.
in the Clearview C.R.C.
2300 Sheridan Gardens Dr.
Oakville, Ont.ario

Home address: 4006 Rushton Cres
Mississauga ON L5L 4H8

Uxbridge, Ont.1965 May 29 London, Ont. 2005

I lift my eyes to the hills –
Where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
The Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 121

JOHANNES D. TANGELDER AND HELEN LOUISE TANGELDER (nee **Feasby**)

We give praise and thanks together with our parents and grandparents on the occasion of their **40th Wedding Anniversary**

Alice Ann Tangelder & Tony Vandergeest, *Kitchener ON*
Christian, Brendan & Caleb
Bernard & Sharon Tangelder, *Ilderton ON*
Rachel, Laura, Anna, & Luke
Johan & Carol Tangelder, *Strathroy ON*
Ethan & Cayla
Mary Tangelder, *Toronto ON*

There will be an **Open House** following the 9:30 morning service at East Strathroy Christian Reformed Church on Sunday May 29

Home address: 1409 Aldersbrook Rd
London ON N6G 3N6

Eibergen, Gelderland 1940 May 17 2005 Grimsby, Ontario 2005

The Lord willing,
with praise and thanksgiving to God,
we are happy to announce the
65th Wedding Anniversary of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

MARTEN AND ANTJE KINGMA
(nee **Peterkamp**)

Jitske & Geert Horinga, *Port Colborne ON*
Bertha Van Der Heide, *Ingersoll ON*
Shirley & Peter Stol, *Strathroy ON*
Marten & Nellie Kingma, *London ON*
Gerben Kingma, *Strathroy ON*
Bert & Diana Kingma, *Stoney Creek ON*
Andrew & Joanne Kingma, *Ilderton ON*
30 grandchildren and one with Jesus,
and 36 8/9 great-grandchildren

Open House will be held on
Saturday May 28, 2005
at the Mountainview Chr. Ref. Church
290 Main St E,Grimsby Ont.
Best Wishes only please.

Home Address:
Shalom Manor, 12 Bartlett Ave
Grimsby ON L3M 4N5

Obituaries

Colynsplaat, The Netherlands Abbotsford, BC
January 13, 1917 April 13, 2005

M. JOHN CONTANT

went home to the Lord at the age of 88.
He is lovingly remembered by his four children,
11 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren
Walter & Linda Mantel, *Terrace BC*
Ron & Bev Mantel, *Terrace BC*
Jacob, Sydney, Lucas and Benjamin
Steve & Rachel Mantel – Ruby, *Vancouver BC*
David Mantel, *Victoria BC*
Martin & Sue Contant, *Surrey, BC*
John & Anne Contant – Tristan, Ella, *Elmhurst IL*
Nathan & Anne Albers-Contant, *Peterborough ON*
Michael & Laura Van Hattem-Contant, *Lindsay ON*
Annelies & Ken Baker, *Kalamazoo MI*
Chris & Athania Baker, *Hong Kong*
Reanna Baker, *Grand Rapids MI*
Sean Baker, *Grand Rapids MI*
Henry & Jan Contant, *Abbotsford BC*
David Contant & Kristin Vanden Bosch (fiancee) *Grand Rapids*
Michelle Contant, *Abbotsford BC*

The funeral took place in Victoria, BC on April 18, 2005. Dad was a great encourager to his family, a strong intercessor, and a man who loved the Lord, the Church and the beauty of God's creation. We are grateful for his life and legacy of faith.

Correspondence: Martin J. Contant
16946 - 58A Ave, Surrey BC V3S 7A1
email: martincontant@telus.net

GERRIT BRINKMAN

Peacefully, in his sleep, after a brief illness, at Ross Memorial Hospital, Lindsay, ON, on Thursday, April 28, 2005 in his 92nd year.

Loving husband for 62 years of Jansje Kraay

Dear dad of Dirk, *Oshawa, ON*
Neal & Janna, *Apsley, ON*
Margriet, *Whitby, ON*
John & Evelyn, *Grafton, ON*
Paul & Patti, *Sioux Lookout, ON*
Bob & Marg, *Bowmanville, ON*

Also missed by 11 grandchildren & 7 great-grandchildren
Pre-deceased by grandson Kurt, brother Dirk & sister Nell.
Survived by brothers Case and Jan, &
sisters Grace and Barbara.

Funeral service was held at Lindsay CRC, Lindsay, Ont. on Monday, May 2, 2005.

Home address: 33 Weldon Rd, Lindsay ON K9V 4R6

Born Sept. 19, 1927
in Oldeboorn, The Netherlands.

With fondest affection and great sadness we announce the passing of our husband and father

Rev. JAN EDDO FRANS "J.E.F." DRESSELHUIS

who went to be with his Father in heaven on Sat. April 16, 2005 at the age of 77.

His life touched lives the world over, whether as a pastor to congregations in Lobith (Netherlands), Belleville, Edmonton and Brandon (Canada), and in the last part of his ministry as Harbour Chaplain of the Christian Reformed Church, tending to the many needs of seafarers in the port of Vancourver and surroundings. In his retirement years, spent in Abbotsford, he enjoyed volunteeering as a counselor with the Telecare Crisis Line, and visitation of those in need.

Known as "Jef", "John", "Prins", "Dominee", "Padre", Opa and Dad, he was a man full of love, compassion, encouragement and humor to all who knew him.

Our assurance and comfort lies in the fact that he is now in the presence of the God he loves because of what Jesus Christ has made possible for all.

He is survived by his devoted wife, Mina, daughters: Jolinka (John), Christianne (Glenn), Gwendolyn (Hans) and son Jeffrey (Andrea); grandchildren: Nicolas, Esther, Micah, Johanna, Sean, Alexander, Lauren, Claire, Jonathan, Anneke and Mariechen; as well as sisters Etty, Agaath and Cisca, their husbands, and relatives in Holland.

He was predeceased by father Frans Dresselhuis and mother Ettje Dresselhuis-Grootjans.

For now we see as in a mirror, dimly;
then, we shall see face to face.
1 Corinthians 13:12

Correspondence address:
3279 Vernon Terrace
Abbotsford BC V2S 6N5

Classifieds/ Careers

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For *information - Nico and Alice Jukema.*
PH: 519-485-2101,
email: guestsuite@lilbitcountry.ca
*web:*www.lilbitcountry.ca

Vacation Rentals

3 Georgian Bay waterfront house-keeping cottages for rent. One 3 bedroom, and two 2 bedroom. Complete with canoe, paddleboat and sea kayaks. Minutes from Killbear Provincial Park. Great for family get-togethers – sleeps 14
info@jacknifecottages.com
905-887-0304

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Contact at: huizengaa@planet.nl

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Pict . Available via E- mail

Ministry Job Opportunities

Part-time Youth Ministry Coordinator
The **Classical Youth Ministry Team** (CYMT) of Eastern Canada has an opening for a 15 hour a week position. This person would work with individual congregation's youth ministries as a resource, leadership trainer, and educator of congregations in the area of youth ministry. The successful candidate would also help organize retreats for youth, training sessions for leaders, and overall raise the awareness of the importance of youth ministry classis wide. For more information, please contact
Pastor Ron Hosmar (CYMT Chairperson),
at 613-225-2889 or **youthpastor@calvincrc.ca**

GRACE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH,
Chatham, Ontario is looking for a
full time Youth & Education Director.
Interested applicants may contact the Church Office. Grace CRC,
PO Box 337, 255 Tweedsmuir Ave W.,
Chatham, ON N7M 5K4
or grace@ciaccess.com or call (519) 436-1558 for information and a job description.

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Little Europe Resort
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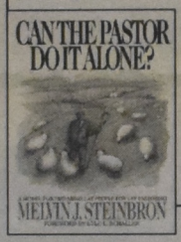
No pets please

Books Wanted

We need 15-20 copies (new or used) of the book **"Can the Pastor Do It Alone?"** by Melvin J. Steinbron, published by Regal Books from Gospel Light, Ventura, California, 1987.



We are willing pay the shipping charges. If you have copies you are willing to sell, please contact us at: **bethelcrc@bellnet.ca or 905-774-7285.**
Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Dunnville, Ontario

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We are seeking a **MUSC DIRECTOR** who provides music that supports and enhances worship, creatively uses a broad knowledge base of traditional and contemporary music, and collaborates with the worship committee to plan worship services. This is a part-time position. Key board skills are necessary. Please include education and experience in your resume. Position available in June/05. The church is located on Lansdowne Ave. in Woodstock, Ontario, Canada.
For more information visit
pebbles37@sympatico.ca,
or phone Deb at **519-539-1806.**

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CJLX 92.3 FM Belleville Ont.
7.30 pm Sunday nights

Available for call

The council of Bethel CRC of Lacombe, Alberta announces that
REV. KIRK MACNEIL
is available for call.
Pastor Kirk can be reached at 13011 - 39 Street, Edmonton Alberta T5A 5A3, by email at rational@telusplanet.net or janetandkirk@msn.com
or by phone at
(780) 456 - 5362

The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) announces the initiation of a search process to fill the position of:

DIRECTOR OF CANADIAN MINISTRIES

It is anticipated that this senior executive position will be filled by action of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The Director of Canadian Ministries (DCM) position requires the candidate to be theologically trained and to be an ordained minister of the Word in the CRC who has served as a pastor in at least one of the congregations of the denomination. The DCM will work from the Burlington, Ontario, office of the CRC and will need to be able to travel on an extensive basis.

To nominate individuals in writing or to confidentially apply for this position, send your resume and a letter of interest, by **July 1, 2005**, to the mailing or email address below.

To obtain more information about the position or the selection process, request an application packet, also by July 1, 2005, from the mailing or email address below.

Mr. Keith Oosthoek
Chair - CRC Search Committee
38 Hillcrest Lane
Kitchener Ontario N2K 1S8 CANADA

E-mail: kandjoosthoek@rogers.com

Additional information can be found on the CRCNA website at www.crcna.org.

Applicants will be considered until the Search Committee has made its selection of a nominee.

In keeping with the CRC Equal Opportunity Policy, persons who are members of a minority group or ethnic community are encouraged to apply.

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MEMBER: AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELORS

See page 22 for more job opportunities

Classifieds

School Job Opportunities

STOUFFVILLE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is inviting applications for an opening at the primary level ,1&2, and a possible opening at the intermediate level ,7&8. Strengths in French, science and or music would be an asset. Consider joining this small but passionate school as we seek to provide first rate Christ-centered education.
Contact Jake Vriend at **scsjake@bellnet.ca** or **905 640 3297**

MARANATHA CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
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for the following positions:

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Resource - 50%

Secondary Division
English, History, Social Science – 100%
Technological Design – 25%
French – 45%

Send applications and complete resume to:
William Van Dyke, Principal
939 Northwood Street, Windsor ON N9E 2B4
Information: 519-966-7424; fax: 519-966-9519

PACIFIC CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
Victoria, BC
is accepting applications for a

DIRECTOR of OPERATIONS

Pacific Christian School (PCS) is a well-established, dynamic and thriving, interdenominational Christian school system of more than 900 students in Pre-School through Grade 12. PCS has a staff of more than 100 employees. The school draws its enrollment from 90 different churches representing 20 denominations in the greater Victoria area.

The **Director of Operations** reports to the Victoria Christian Education Society (VCES) Board and is part of a senior management team that includes the administrators of the secondary and elementary schools. The Director is responsible for analyzing and reporting on VCES's financial performance to the Board, and for leading the preparation of the annual budget. The Director has a key leadership role in the stewardship of the VCES financial resources, and in the achievement of compliance with Board policies. The Director is responsible for other non-academic administrative functions of the VCES.

Qualifications:
- College or university degree: emphasis in finance or business administration (or equivalent education and related experience).
- Extensive experience (minimum 5 years) in budgeting, policy analysis/development, and financial reporting/analysis.
- Business experience in a school environment is a definite asset.

A detailed job description and full qualifications are available upon request. Salary and benefits will be commensurate with appropriate training and relevant experience, and is based on the administrative salary grid. Suitably qualified, Christian applicants are invited to apply by May 24, 2005. Ideally, the successful applicant would commence duties by August 2005, to allow time for in-service training and orientation with the current Director of Operations. Please forward your letter of application, resume, references, and pastor's reference and/or Christian statement of faith to: Jack Taekema, on behalf of Director of Operations Search Committee, 671 Agnes Street, Victoria BC V8Z 2E7.

Direct enquires to:
Bill Helmus, Elementary Principal
Pacific Christian School
671 Agnes St, Victoria BC V8Z 2E7
Phone:(250) 479-9365
Fax: (250) 479-3685
Email: bhelmus@pacificchristian.ca
Website: www.pacificchristian.ca

PACIFIC CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Consider a career in a 'growing' field!

Rosa Flora Limited

Rosa Flora Limited, an expanding grower and wholesaler of fresh cut flowers and potted plants in the Niagara region, is looking for a **full-time permanent Assistant Accountant,** to join our administrative team. We are looking for a graduate with a business major, a graduate of a college accounting program, or have equivalent work experience. Reporting directly to the controller, you will need to have a strong understanding on G/L concepts. Proficiency with AccPacc and Microsoft Office Suite a must, as is commitment to confidentiality. We offer an exciting work environment, and competitive wages and benefits. If you can work independently within the context of team goals, please direct your resume by May 30, 2005 to Nicole Birrell.

Email: nicole@rosaflora.com
Fax: 905-774-2818 **Web**: www.rosaflora.com
Rosa Flora Limited, 756 Diltz Road
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Email: dvanderwoerd@rossmcbride.com

Events

Milk & Honey Festival at Redeemer University College May 30 to June 3.

The "Stories of Life, Stories for Life" theme features lectures by **Dr. James Rusthoven** and **Professor Johanna Kuyvenhoven**, Concerts and excursions in the area.

For registration contact the Redeemer Box Office
877-779-0913
ext 4211

GODERICH, ON
The
DUTCH DIAMOND LIBERATION
in conjunction with
the Legion invite you to
THANK THE VETERANS.
Festivities on the Square.
Viewing of the Lancaster airplane at the airport in the morning Parade at 1:00 p.m.
Dedication of the Pavilion at the Liberation Memorial Park (hwy 21 and Hamilton St. at 2:00 p.m.
May 14

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

May 14 GODERICH, ON The Dutch Diamond Liberation in conjunction with the Legion invite you to Thank the Veterans. Festivities on the Square. Viewing of the Lancaster airplane at the airport in the morning Parade at 1:00 p.m. Dedication of the Pavilion at the Liberation Memorial Park (hwy 21 and Hamilton St. at 2:00 p.m.

May 30 - June 3 Milk & Honey Festival at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster**. The "Stories of Life, Stories for Life" theme features lectures by Dr. James Rusthoven and Professor Johanna Kuyvenhoven, concerts and excursions. For registration contact: Redeemer Box Office 877-779-0913 ext 4211.

June 8 Hollandse Dag, 10 a.m. at the **Moorefield** Community Centre. For more information call H. Rumph at 1-519-638-2053 or see ad this issue.

June 8 Hollandse Dag at 1st **Kingston** CRC, 10 a.m. Rev. Peter VanEgmond will speak .More info: E. Hiddema, (613) 546-5615. See ad.

June 24-26 Christian Reformed Church of **Kentville, Nova Scotia** will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary. For more details contace Gerrit Tenyenhuis, ph.1-902-678-7641 or gtenyenhuis@nssympatico.ca or the church at 1-902-678-6293 or fax 1-902-679-5230. Email: kentvillecrc@ns.sympatico.ca

July 1-3 Nobleford CRC 100 year anniversary celebrations with picnic, banquet and services. For more information contact Bert/Pat Konynenbelt at (403)824-3442 or by e-mail at bpkbelt@telus.net

July 8-10 Charlottetown Christian Ref. Church will be celebrating 50 years of ministry. For information, contact the church office at **902-894-4721** or email: chtowncrc@pei.aibn.com.

Timothy Christian School

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

With praise and thanks to God we announce the opening of our new school building. Come celebrate with us as we dedicate the new Timothy Christian School in Barrie at 750 Essa Road on

Saturday, June 4, 2005 at 2:00 p.m.

A brief ribbon cutting ceremony will be followed by an unveiling of the cornerstone, a helium balloon release, and a stand-up reception. We look forward to seeing you there! Please contact the school for further information.

Timothy Christian School
750 Essa Road, **Barrie** ON L4N 9E9
(705) 726-6621
www.timothychristianschool.ca
tcsgen@timothychristianschool.ca

Retirement Annoucements

Classis Chatham, at its January 25, 2005 session, approved the honourable emeritation of

REV. PAUL STADT

for reason of age effective May 29, 2005. May God richly bless Paul and Linda in their retirement years. Congratulations may be forwarded to

Jeannie Bakker
64 Shawnee Trail, Chatham ON N7M 6K4
or email: jack.bakker@sympatico.ca

Jack Herder, Stated Clerk

The Georgetown District Christian School Community congratulates

CORRIE BOOTSMA

on her retirement! Corrie has served with the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools for 40 years, as a teacher and principal!

May God richly bless you in all your future endeavors!

DE ZES EN DERTIGSTE (36)

HOLLANDSE DAG

word gehouden

WOENSDAG 8 JUNI 2005 OM 10 UUR in de **MOOREFIELD COMMUNITY CENTER.**

Samenzang, voordrachten, musicale medewerking van Casy Gordyn en van "De Zingende Sysjes" onder leiding van Joyce Kuper
Spreker: Ds. J. J. Hoytema van Grimsby, Ont.
Lunch meenemen en uw eigen koffiekop.
Vry koffie en koek.

Hier ontmoet je meer dan 400 vrienden en kennissen
En hun gezelschap wil je zeker niet missen
Daarom, voor gezelligheid en plezierig uitgaan
Moet je **DE HOLLANDSE DAG** zeker niet overslaan.

Voor nadere informatie telefoneer
Hilbert Rumph, Drayton, ON **Tel. 519-638-2053**

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HOLLANDSE DAG

at 1st **Kingston** CRC,
on **June 8, 2005**, 10 a.m.
Rev. Peter VanEgmond will speak on "WAAR BLIJFT DE KERK, VROEGER AND NU".
Mrs. Jennie VanEgmond will entertain us, and special music is provided by John DeVries.
More info: E. Hiddema, (613) 546-5615

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Calvin students design mill for use in Kenya

Phil De Haan

Farmers in Kenya soon will benefit from a new, hand-crankable mill designed by a team of senior engineering students at Calvin College.

Team "Sow What?" Spent this entire school year researching, planning, designing and building a small mill that farmers in Kenya, and other countries, can use to increase their productivity in harvesting amaranth, a broadleaf plant that grows to between two and eight feet tall and has a very high nutritional value.

The students – mechanical engineering students Brian Katerberg (Kettering, OH), Kristin De Groot (Tulare, CA), Dan Schrik (Brantford, ON) and Andy Vander Moren (Hanford, CA) – are working with volunteers from Hillcrest Christian Reformed Church and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) on the project.

The amaranth seed is becoming a versatile cash crop in eastern Africa with the seeds of the plant sold as a health food in the United States. In fact, amaranth sells for three times as much as corn on the current market, making it a good source of income for struggling farmers.

The mills currently being used to thresh and winnow amaranth seed in Kenya are rundown and inefficient. The Calvin team designed a mill that is simple and efficient.

"We wanted to do something that was third-world oriented, something that was helping people rather than something that was fun for the moment without a purpose," says Katerberg, whose mission trips to Malaysia and Thailand have made him eager to use his engineering degree in third-world development.

The mill developed by the team is a small, hand-cranked model, which utilizes a fan to blow the chaff free of the amaranth seed. The team intentionally designed a small mill to make it easy to ship the machine through customs.

Bob Brute, the director of ministries for Hillcrest CRC, likes the students' design for its simplicity and effectiveness.

"I think the prototype machine is absolutely beautiful," he says. "When I see the size – it's lightweight – when I see that it threshes and cleans, it's just astounding what those students have done."

Brute says that Hillcrest volunteers have been working on an amaranth project in Kenya for four years now and formerly bought used mills at antique stores and auctions before refurbishing them for use by amaranth growers. But those old models didn't winnow the amaranth seed.

The hand-powered nature of the mill is an appropriate touch as well says Brute.

"Everything we do there has to be hand-powered," he says. "They have an absolute abundance of labor there."

Team "Sow What?" already has tested the prototype mill with amaranth grown by Hillcrest members.

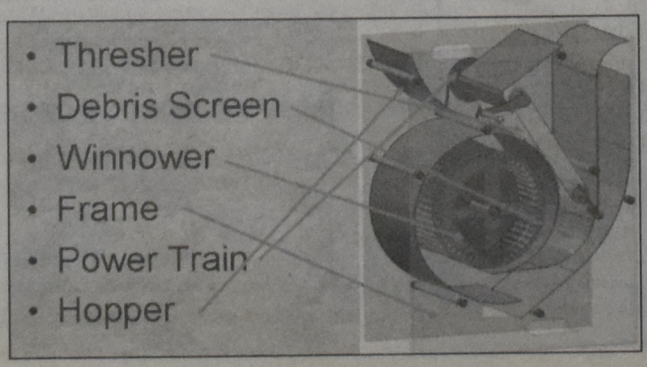
The next step is to begin producing the mill and shipping it to Kenya. The plan is to send it as a kit along with pictorial instructions being tailored by the student design team to Kenyan reading abilities.

Brute notes that the list of countries who want the mills is growing and now includes amaranth projects in Uganda, Mexico and Belize.

Calvin professor Steve VanderLeest says the "Sow What?" project is a good example of what Calvin looks for in its students' senior design efforts.

"It's a good project in a number of ways," he says. "We like seeing students work with real-world groups because they have to work within constraints. Doing that forces them to be creative in ways they normally wouldn't be when they design on paper. It is certainly one of the ways we like to see our teams use their engineering and put it in practice with their faith."

Other projects for 2004-2005 include an automatic deterrent system to help protect gardens from animals that raid them, a machine to remove air from a pre-assembled shock and then fill it with light-weight shock oil (for race car applications) and the designing of a building addition for Dutton Christian School.



News Digest

Border security beefed up

If you venture near the Canada-U.S. border and see a gang of tough characters skulking on the southern side, beware. They may be vigilantes. A civilian patrol group that has been monitoring the Mexican border for illegal immigrants said it wants to expand its mission to the Canadian border. Having caught some 330 Mexicans trying to sneak into Arizona, they now have their eye on bigger game. Much bigger, according to recent reports on Canadian obesity rates.

They planned to begin making rounds in Idaho, Michigan, North Dakota and Vermont. Them's a lot of woods to cover.

The vigilantes are taking big risks for the security of their country. They will be dealing with mad cows, even madder mosquitos, and the ever dangerous Canadian MD, fleeing socialized medicine for a bigger paycheck. They had better have someone watching their backs as well. Rumor has it that many Democrats and Iraq-weary National guardsmen are headed northward.

TV – Good for you

Far from making us stupid, violent and lazy, TV and video games are good for us, says a new book by Steven Johnson, *Everything Bad Is Good for You*. TV, DVDs, video games and computers are making us smarter every day. Just as the complexity of Mozart stimulates the brains of infants, so the complexity of TV shows and video games stimulates the minds of our couch-potato generation.

And we thought that glazed-over look was a sign of stupidity. And a few years ago another bright fellow who hates TV argued that it causes brain damage. Brother, were we fooled!

Those complex plots and sudden scene shifts keep your brain nimble, able to make lightning quick connections, instantly discern patterns, etc.

Of course, this isn't true of the PBS news shows and documentaries that I watch, which tend to keep a pretty steady focus on a few talking heads or to pursue a linear thesis. To get the full benefits of TV, if I understand Johnson correctly, I'll have to switch to shows like *The Sopranos*, *24*, and *Desperate Housewives* to get really, really intelligent.

Actually, I have long suspected that computer-playing skills were not a total loss. In the novel *Ender's Game*, kids trained to shoot down enemy aliens in computer games end up saving the earth from real alien invaders.

Speed is everything in intelligence. We've taken that model of intelligence from the computer. The more judgments per microsecond that you can make, the better you'll do in the stock market and as a general in the military. This, according to another book titled *Blink*. It's us slow, plodding types who gather up facts and weigh conflicting evidence who are fast becoming obsolete in the nano-age.

And there's other good news

More good news, not only is TV good for you, being a few pounds overweight is too. The U.S. Center for Disease Control found that people who are slightly overweight have a lower risk of death than people of normal weight. To think that not long ago the Guardians of the Public Good were about ready to padlock every MacDonald's, Burger King and Tim Horton's and snatch obese kids from their parents to put them in foster care families without couches or televisions. Goes to show that if you sit back and wait long enough, science will come to the rescue.

I'm always a bit puzzled by reports like this that tell us one group has a lower risk of death than another. I've always lived with the illusion that the risk of death is equal for each and everyone of us – 100 percent.

Maybe I'll have a couple of strips of bacon on my hamburger after all.

The latest issue of *Scientific American* provides support for the contention that male-female differences extend even to the brain. Gender has an impact on many areas of thinking and behavior, including memory, emotion, vision, hearing, the processing of faces and the brain's response to stress hormones.

I scanned the article carefully for useful information to bolster the faltering ego of the male of the species. Despite the care the author takes not to provide any ammo for male supremacists, I found something I can use. Women are more oriented to faces from early infancy. The next time, men, your wife asks why your eyes were focused elsewhere than on "that woman's" face, you can blame your failure on your brain. It has nothing to do with testosterone.